Åbo Akademi University

Sofia Lahti

# Silver Arms and Silk Heads

## Medieval Reliquaries in the Nordic Countries

Cover image: Bishop Petrus Lykke holding the bust reliquary of St Birgitta for her canonisation in the Council of Constanz in 1414-1418.
Drawing from Ulrich Richental's Chronik des Konzils zu Konstanz.
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Helgonrelikernas närvaro var en helig kraft som omfattade allt från den rent religiösa upplevelsen till politikens och ekonomins sfärer i det medeltida samhället. Upplevelsen av denna närvaro skedde genom relikvarierna, som hörde till medeltidens värdefullaste och visuellt mest imponerande föremål. I Norden har relikvariernas historia dock hittills varit mindre känd.

Syftet med avhandlingen är att utreda hur relikvarierna upplevdes och uppfattades i det medeltida Norden: fokus ligger på på deras visuella egenskaper och hur de användes i olika religiösa och sekulära sammanhang. Detta görs genom en noggrann läsning av alla tillgängliga medeltida skriftliga källor, som till exempel mirakelsamlingar och testamenten, samt en analys av de existerande relikvarierna ur ikonografins och objektbiografins synvinkel. Metodologiskt avgörande är att största delen av föremålen inte längre existerar, och att de skriftliga källornas information är fragmentarisk och ojämn. Detta innebär att en jämförelse mellan föremålen och en genomgående enhetlig frågeställning inte är möjliga, utan materialet måste analyseras utgående från de tillgängliga informationsfragmenten.

Resultatet är den första heltäckande sammanställningen av medeltida relikvariers historia i Norden; flera hittills okända artefakt har upptäckts i medeltida källor och nya insikter om de kända relikvariernas medeltida funktioner presenteras.

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# Foreword

Studying reliquaries has been fun – such fun that I have been in no hurry to finish the work. Since the beginning and all along the way, my admired teachers, colleagues and friends have helped my absent mind get back on track. Professor Åsa Ringbom was my first supervisor who sent me to Rome on a life-changing FIDEM course of medieval written sources and then endured my slow progress in dissertation work. Professor Bo Ossian Lindberg was the one to get me interested in reliquaries in the first place and made sure we all remembered Kipling's maxim "check and re-check" as well as the importance of reading several languages. The late Helena Edgren, Director General of the National Museum, was my gentle and inspirational "extra supervisor" during some years. Lecturer Kari Kotkavaara and Associate Professor Marie-Sofie Lundström bravely took on the duty of supervising the last moments of the journey, and already before that, they both, together with Professor Lars Berggren, steered us all in the Art History research seminar to the right direction with insightful advice. University lecturer Elina Räsänen underwent a wonderful transformation from friend to supervisor – without her incredible capacity of understanding my research aims and challenges in a much more nuanced way than myself, this work would never have been finished.

Numerous other medieval friends and colleagues have given me professional support, ideas and advice and encouraged me. With Professor Anu Lahtinen, I took my first medieval steps (probably branle) in the mid-1990s, and she has been a source of good ideas for next steps ever since. Other lucky encounters have come my way in seminars, conferences, at Villa Lante and in Glossa (the Society for Medieval Studies in Finland). I think of them all with gratitude, but I shall name only a few examples: Katri Vuola, Tuija Tuhkanen, Minna Lehtomäki, Tuija Ainonen, Eva Ahl-Waris, thank you for sharing your knowledge and enthusiasm. I am grateful to Professor Tuomas Heikkilä for taking me along on his Dominican archive course in Rome, and to Docent Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, Professor Christian Krötzl, Researcher Marjo Meriluoto and the rest of the team for letting me participate in the planning and making of the exhibition "Finnish Pilgrimages of the Middle Ages" at the Vapriikki museum in

Tampere. Professor Lena Liepe, Professor Visa Immonen and Docent Marika Räsänen have been kindred spirits in recognising the fascinating power of relics. Now many of them have extended their support to concretely participating in the dissertation process: I feel extremely privileged to have Lena Liepe as my opponent, Visa Immonen and Lena Liepe as my pre-examiners, and Marika Räsänen, Sari Katajala-Peltomaa and Associate Professor Johanna Ilmakunnas as members of the evaluation committee. I am also grateful to Marie-Sofie Lundström for taking on the role of custos.

Even if I managed to spend altogether eighteen years with this project, the thesis was not merely written in the evenings and weekends. I have been very lucky to have had research-oriented bosses, Museum Directors Asko Mäkelä and Elina Heikka, as well as Chief Curator Anni Wallenius, who have showed saintly patience for my countless research leaves. I also want to thank PhD Roger Pineda for dedicating a few of his own evenings and weekends on correcting the English of this thesis, although I have produced dozens of new pages and mistakes since.

Financially, my research was made possible by a three-year grant from the Finnish Culture Foundation, preceded by a one-year grant for the FIDEM Diploma studies in Rome. After that, I have received financial support for conference and research trips as well as shorter research periods from my own department/subject of Art History (konstvetenskap), Stiftelsens för Åbo Akademi forskningsinstitut, Gustaf Packaléns Mindefond, and Tampere University Doctoral School in History. I have also received countless mini-scholarships from the pockets of my parents and grandparents, who have followed my slow progress with faith, love and curiosity.

The research visits to different heritage institutions have been easy and pleasant thanks to the kind and helpful staff at Finnish Heritage Agency, Turku Cathedral Museum, Danish National Museum, National Gallery of Denmark, Swedish History Museum, Swedish National Heritage Board, Sigtuna Church of St Mary, Stockholm City Archives, and Oslo Museum of Cultural History, Schnütgen Museum and the Church of St Ursula in Cologne.

My deepest gratitude is to my medieval ally number one, Professor José Filipe Silva, whose presence is my greatest source of joy and well-being. And in equal measure, to our treasure more precious than gold,

Tomás, who still (at the time of going to print) prefers Ancient Greece to the Middle Ages.

Needless to say, the support and company of non-medieval family, friends and colleagues has been essential. One of them is no longer here to celebrate with me. I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my dear friend Sanna Inkeri Mikkola.

Åbo, Marie himmelsfärd (Assumptio Beatae Mariae Virginis) 15.8.2019
Sofia Lahti

# INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING RELIQUARIES

## 1 – Representing Relics: Questions on Medieval Reliquaries

The presence of saints in the form of relics was a powerful element in medieval European culture, extending from the purely religious experience to more mundane spheres such as politics and the economy. Relics were generally not directly accessible nor visible; rather, their presence was mediated by their containers, the reliquaries. Therefore, the way relics were perceived and imagined was influenced by the design of the reliquaries that hid and protected them while simultaneously expressing and highlighting that presence. For most churchgoers, reliquaries were the most impressive and precious objects they would ever see in their lifetime.

Art historian Émile Mâle wrote over hundred years ago that "[a] really fine study of relics would be one of the most curious chapters of mediaeval history, and one which the historian of civilisation and the historian of art would find equally instructive."[1] Historians Caroline Walker Bynum and Paula Gerson have expressed the same thought about reliquaries: "[u]nderstanding exactly how relics were housed and displayed – and why they were treated thus – is crucial to understanding the political, social, artistic and religious history of the western Middle Ages."[2]

The statements quoted above also apply to the northernmost parts of Europe, and the history of Nordic reliquaries has been waiting to be written. The aim of this thesis is thus precisely to examine the visual and material diversity of the reliquaries that existed in the Nordic countries during the medieval period and to provide new insights into their history as artefacts and cult objects. To achieve this, I systematically investigate the principal source materials: (i) the reliquaries that still exist, and (ii) medieval written sources, which almost exclusively concern reliquaries that are now lost. The result of

[1] Mâle 1961 (1899), 316.
[2] Bynum & Gerson 1997, 4.

this effort is the present thesis, which is the first monograph on the history of medieval reliquaries in the Nordic Countries (or the area which is now Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland).[3] Although relics are essential for the existence of reliquaries, they are not the topic of this study.

The aim of this thesis is to understand how reliquaries were perceived in this region during the Middle Ages. The first aspect of this is based on the reliquaries' visual and material characteristics: their shapes, sizes, materials, and iconographical motifs, and how those were related to their contents (the relics). The second aspect concerns the ways reliquaries were described, treated, and interacted with. Those visual and social aspects were influenced by varying local and international contextual factors, such as religious and aesthetic ideals, economical and political situations, or personal intentions of the people involved. In order to take these factors into account, the art historical and iconographical approach is accompanied by perspectives of contemporary artefact studies. In this case, that means recognising the activity or agency of reliquaries and viewing the isolated fragments of information as parts of their continuous social and cultural biographies.

In the course of my research, I have encountered over 600 Nordic reliquaries, of which less than 200 are extant and over 400 are lost. These numbers are based on information available today, but they are fairly arbitrary; due to the disappearance of several relevant medieval documents since the 16th century, the number of reliquaries that existed cannot be properly ascertained. A lost reliquary may only have been registered in one document that, in its turn, was lost as well, and with it, our possibility of ever knowing the reliquary existed.

The brief and sometimes incidental references to reliquaries in surviving documents demonstrate the random nature of the information we currently possess. This does not mean that one should not or could not conduct research on this material; rather, it means

[3] This area is often called "medieval Scandinavia", but to be precise about including Finland, I refer to them as the Nordic countries. Though not geographically part of Scandinavia, Finland was increasingly part of the Realm of Sweden after its Christianisation in the 12th century.

that the sources demand a careful and critical reading with a systematic awareness of the absent information, of what cannot be known or assumed. The present research project is based on the conviction that the only method for assessing this fragmented landscape is to collect the remaining elements of information and view them together as a whole. I will not discuss all the extant and lost reliquaries, but they are all included in a catalogue, which is accessible in the online version of this thesis. The aim of the catalogue is not to present all available information on each object, but simply to list all the known objects into a first *corpus* of Nordic medieval reliquaries, which can later be complemented.

Although my aim is to understand and discuss all types of reliquaries found in the Nordic countries, a particular focus is on body-part reliquaries. Most of the lost hand or head reliquaries I have identified have previously been unrecognised in Nordic medieval sources. The seven extant ones date from between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, and although their provenance is mostly unknown, each of them preserves elements or clues for establishing at least a partial background. The justification for the focus on body-part reliquaries is that, more than any other type, they express the complex interplay between shape and content, body-part and body, image and relic, that forms the essence of all reliquaries.

The central conceptual and theoretical framework for this study is thus twofold. Firstly, there are *ontological* questions concerning the visuality and materiality of the reliquaries and their relation to their audiences. Secondly, there is the *epistemological* challenge of interpreting lost and fragmented objects or sources. In the following sections, these questions and issues concerning the source material will be discussed more thoroughly, followed by an overview of the relevant primary sources and secondary literature.

**Questions and Perspectives: From Shapes to Social Life**

Medieval reliquaries have been considered both as artworks and artefacts and usually include elements that lend themselves to art historical, and particularly iconographic, analysis. At the same time, they benefit from an object-oriented study that concentrates on various other aspects, such as their character of sacred commodities. This is particularly true for the reliquaries studied here, not only

because they are either lost or damaged, but also because of their design; hagiographic visual narratives are only typical of certain sarcophagi and caskets, while the visual content in most other reliquaries either consists of the three-dimensional sculptural shape of the object, single images, short texts, or symbolic or decorative patterns. For some Nordic reliquaries, only non-visual details are known – such as their contents, material, value, location, or owner. Nevertheless having an implied visuality makes them legitimate objects of art historical research.

As art historian Georges Didi-Huberman and others have pointed out, there is no single exhaustive "art historical perspective", since the field itself is subject to constant epistemological change.[4] One change in recent decades has been the growing influence of visual culture studies and a material-oriented approach in this perspective. As art historian Thelma K. Thomas pioneeringly writes, "[i]n a full and precisely apt object study, *the art work and its material qualities* are also assessed historically, and available archaeological evidence *and documentary sources* are analysed in order to determine the circumstances in which a given artefact was *used and experienced*."[5]

An inevitable question concerning reliquaries is how they relate to, represent, or express their contents. This relationship is central to their existence, and yet, as art historian Cynthia Hahn has stated, reliquaries do not essentially point inwards, towards their contents, but outwards or up, towards salvation and eternal life in heaven.[6] While this is certainly true, they are also impregnated with various other references and meanings, for instance, representing their donors or commissioners, as well as individual saints. Further questions regarding artefacts are related to their shape, illustrations, material history, and functions: who commissioned and donated the reliquary, and with what intentions? Where did it come from? How was it used, and been used since? What was its meaning in the local cult or culture? Which saint or saints does it represent, and how? How does the reliquary relate to the iconography of the saint? Does the

[4] Didi-Huberman 1990, 46.
[5] Thomas 2002, 9, (italics mine).
[6] Hahn 2012, 3–29; 244.

reliquary's shape or iconography hold references to the object's own background or history? Is the reliquary unique or part of a genre? How were the relics inside related to the reliquary around them? How has it been interpreted and treated after the Middle Ages? However, as will be revealed through the course of this thesis, not all these questions can be answered about each of the reliquaries in question, as it depends on the information available in each case.

What is worth noting, already, is how many of these questions dwell on the interaction between artefacts and people. This aspect can be approached using the conceptual frameworks presented in the influential anthology *Social Life of Things*, edited in 1988 by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. According to these accounts, the meanings of an artefact are shaped and transformed in interaction with its users; objects embody multiple meanings and values and contribute to the lives of individuals and communities around them.[7] More concretely, medieval images and objects went through different transformations of their material constitution and meaning during their "active life": they were transported, hidden, revealed, dressed, broken, repainted, neglected, and perhaps given new functions. Art historian Jérôme Baschet considers them mortal because, apart from the possibility of physical destruction, their life can be interrupted by a change in liturgy, cult or aesthetic preference.[8] Trying to tell the story of those lives, I follow the itineraries of the reliquaries in focus, whenever the available sources allow, from their commissioning and construction, through their cult heyday, to their eventual disappearance or transferral to a museum display. Although I find all stages in an object's life relevant for understanding its different cultural meanings, a detailed biography is seldom possible with this kind of material, and the same limitation applies to other research approaches. Indeed, even if it were possible to systematically ask the same research questions regarding every item, their fragmentary

[7] In the anthology edited by Appadurai, Igor Kopytoff introduces the concept of a "cultural biography" of objects, focusing on their commoditization. Nowadays, the biographical approach in artefact studies is based on a wider perspective. See Kopytoff 1988 (1986), 64–94; Geary 1988 (1986), 169–194; Cole 2013, 106–118. For more on our interaction with the material world, see also Lehtonen 2008.

[8] Baschet 1996, 13.

nature makes it unrealistic to expect each of them to hold answers to all of the questions.

A uniform approach is also challenged by the fact that reliquaries share few characteristics, except for their core function of containing, having contained, or at least being *meant* to contain, relics. They range from large sarcophagi to tiny crucifixes or elaborate busts that would be hardly recognisable as reliquaries without prior knowledge of their function. In this study and in the catalogue, they are arranged typologically. Typology is used as a tool for structuring the extensive data, but categorization is not an end in itself nor even a realistic goal considering the objects discussed here. Much of the terminology used to describe or categorise different reliquaries since the Middle Ages is highly ambiguous, but I will discuss that in each typological section. For visual appraisal and comparison, however, an ambiguous terminology and typology are better than none at all. In dividing the reliquaries into typological groups, my approach is based largely on medieval terminology and on art historian Joseph Braun's classic book "Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes" (1940), with a few adjustments dictated by the material.[9] Because such a large amount of the reliquaries are lost and their shape is not known, the typology also includes classes not based on the shape, but on other aspects such as the materials or the terminology used in medieval sources. For the same reason, an object discussed in the context of one reliquary type might in reality have represented a different type or had characteristics of various types.

[9] A different typology for the Nordic reliquaries is presented by archaeologist Niels-Knud Liebgott, who divides them "in four main types: shrines of saints, *sepulchra*, portable reliquaries, and jewel reliquaries". He also defines the body-part reliquaries as "narrative reliquaries", referring to the old idea that "their shape reflects the part of the saint's body they contain". See Liebgott 1993, 525–526. My own typology is rather different, but two of his definitions deserve a comment here. Shrines were excluded from Liebgott's class of portable reliquaries, but in fact shrines were often carried in processions and had arrangements to make them "portable". As for narrative reliquaries, I rather understand the term as referring to reliquaries with one or more narrative images, illustrating not the body-part inside, but the *vita* and/or *martyrium* of the saint. -For a concise introduction to the concept of narrative in medieval images, see Sears 2002, 160–161. On illustrated *vitas* in reliquaries, see Hahn 2001.

**Focus: Nordic, Medieval, and Reliquary**

Reliquaries and the cult of relics in the Catholic culture of medieval Europe display a wide variety of visual expressions; the varieties are based on an extant, but gradually changing typology, with only small local differences. Thus the reliquaries in Nordic countries are not aesthetically independent as such, but the local limit of the sample in this research project allows for a clearer focus. In what follows, I will briefly explain the logic behind the inclusion or exclusion of certain materials or perspectives in this work.

There are various reasons for addressing the history of reliquaries in the Nordic Countries as a whole. Apart from belonging to the same linguistic family (with the exception of Finnish), these countries share the history of a Catholic period of roughly five hundred years between the official establishment of Christianity and the Protestant Reformation. Politically, the area was connected via different unions – most significantly the Kalmar Union from 1397 to 1523, which coincides with the dating of most of the reliquaries discussed here. This common background also includes effects of the Reformation on the material heritage of the Catholic era – the confiscation of church treasures left few reliquaries for posterity. Furthermore, post-Reformation history and the continuous collaboration between the Nordic Countries is reflected in their having similar cultural and heritage policies, which has led to the relatively good preservation of the remaining medieval artefacts.

Christianity – and thus the cult of saints and relics – was first established in Denmark: Lund was the archdiocese for the entire Nordic area as early as 1104, whereas Norway and Sweden only became church provinces in 1153 and 1164, respectively. The Danish archbishops were thus papal legates for the whole region. Within the Dominican and Franciscan orders, abbeys in Norway and Sweden belonged to the Danish province, known as Dacia.[10] Frequent changes in ruler and state borders had an impact on ecclesiastic power relations as well; the area of Skåne (Scania), now the southernmost part of Sweden, belonged to Denmark for much of the Middle Ages. Danish rulers have often declared themselves in charge of Norway,

[10] Blomkvist 1997, 25–31.

too, and halfway through the Kalmar Union (from 1448), Norway proclaimed its fealty to the Danish throne, continuing its union with Denmark until 1814.[11] Meanwhile, Finland was part of Sweden from around 1150 until 1809.[12]

Denmark had the most reliquaries, as there was a greater density of churches built in Denmark than in any other European country in the Middle Ages. In fact, a total of 2692 churches, governed by eight dioceses, were built in the area.[13] In comparison, Norway – or the archdiocese of Nidaros – built about 1300 medieval churches and was divided into five dioceses, with the addition of five insular dioceses. Meanwhile, Sweden fell within the archdiocese of Uppsala, which consisted of seven dioceses. Sweden's estimated number of medieval churches (2350) comes closer to the Danish number, but over a much larger geographical area. Of the Swedish churches, 155 were in what is today Finland, in the medieval diocese of Turku (or Åbo).[14]

In the Nordic Countries, as elsewhere, there were plenty of local saints, but few of them were officially canonised. The first canonisations of local saints started in Denmark in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: as many as four were canonised before 1234 – St Canute, Canute Lavard, William of Æbelholt, and Kjeld of Viborg – after which point the Vatican began systematically controlling canonisations. It is also believed that the national saints – Olaf, Eric, and Henrik – were canonised before this time although documents have not been found. St Birgitta is the only Nordic saint after this date whose canonisation (in 1391) can be confirmed by existing documents.[15] Other saints were still waiting for the pope to accept their canonisation when the process was interrupted by the Protestant Reformation; these were Hemming of Turku, Ingrid of Skänninge,

[11] Blomkvist 1997, 30; see also pages 33–64 in the same book for the individual cases of each Kalmar Union country.

[12] For more on perceptions of Finland as a country in the Middle Ages, see e.g. Tarkiainen 2008.

[13] Wienberg 1993, 21; 180–199; 242. Wienberg's dissertation discusses the economic and spiritual reasons behind this density, arguing that the intense building period in the last decades before the Reformation was a reaction to signs of an approaching crisis.

[14] Hiekkanen 2003, 15; 251. A lower estimate in Gardberg, 1998, 13.

[15] Krötzl 1994, 54–75; 82–87; Krötzl 2014, 37; Liebgott 1982, 11–22.

Brynolf of Skara, and Nils Hermansson of Linköping, all of whom were considered blessed and had received the papal licence for their translation (transferral of their relics from a tomb to a new shrine or various reliquaries). Even without canonisation, the cults of these saints were consciously created, administered, and maintained by dioceses and abbeys. An analysis of the dioceses of Linköping and Lund by Anders Fröjmark shows a pattern that was probably replicated over the whole area: dioceses aimed to concentrate cultic activity around these official saints and their cult sites, and by controlling small local cults in this way, they hoped to secure regional political power and benefit from the income brought in by visitors to the shrines. For the dioceses, it was essential that these cults be either officialised or abolished, as they could not be left in the hands of laypeople.[16]

As mentioned earlier, this study is limited to the area within the boundaries of the present-day continental Nordic countries, but this means that interesting and valuable materials from their insular neighbours to the west and parts of the medieval Nordic region to the south are regrettably left out, and these merit a separate study.[17]

"The Middle Ages" is a temporal frame for the origins of the reliquaries presented, but as many scholars have pointed out, the period is far from being a monocultural entity, and exact chronological definitions of the period vary depending on the regional historical processes or events in question. For the present study, I define the period as starting with the arrival of the Catholic cult of saints in the Nordic Countries and ending with the Protestant Reformation. While my focus is on the Middle Ages, the "life" of the

[16] This taking control has been analysed as a worldwide phenomenon by André Vauchez in his book *La sainteté en occident aux derniers siècles du moyen age d'apres les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques*, 1981, as Fröjmark notes. Fröjmark 1992, 178–180; see also Bynum 2011, 167–171. The history of relics in the North is discussed more here at the beginning of part III.

[17] The regions in question include Iceland, Greenland and the Færoe islands, which belonged to Norway both politically and ecclesiastically for most of the Middle Ages, and parts of contemporary Estonia and Germany, which were under Danish rule during certain periods of the Middle Ages. Estonia also had active contacts with Finland, which was facilitated by the linguistic and geographic proximity.

artefacts discussed may reach beyond the period, if that is permitted by the sources.

The lack of provenance data complicates the study of existing medieval reliquaries. While some can be directly connected to a specific time and place from their iconography, textual content, or other data, there are others whose northern existence in the Middle Ages cannot be confirmed. In these uncertain cases, the artefacts have only been included based on their historiographic record as Nordic reliquaries. Nearly all of the body-part reliquaries are uncertain in this respect: they are not mentioned in any known medieval text, and they have no confirmed connection to any Nordic church or person. In other words, their medieval Nordic backgrounds are based on hypotheses. Their connection to Nordic churches may therefore be confirmed or rebutted by future research. This ambiguity cannot be simply ignored when discussing these objects, but the lost reliquaries mentioned in Nordic medieval documents are less problematic in this sense – so long as the documents are deemed trustworthy, the objects' ties to Nordic medieval history can be seen as certain, even if this comes with various interpretational problems.

There are several topics and aspects of the cult of relics and its visual expressions that are closely connected with the subject matter of my thesis, and yet must stay outside its scope. One of these – as physically and epistemologically central as it seems to the theme of reliquaries – is the relics themselves. Because of the art historical approach adopted here, relics are only observed from the point of view of the reliquaries that were made for them. Nevertheless, the visuality of the relics themselves is crucial for the aesthetics of the reliquaries and cannot be completely overlooked. Reliquaries only existed because of the relics they contained, and often practices in the cult of relics are reflected in a reliquary's visual expressions and vice versa.

A perspective more focused on the saints could shed light on the interplay between relics and legends, saintly iconographies, liturgies, and religious music, but they are not discussed at length as I focus on the artefacts. Another essential topic would be the role of architecture in the cult of relics – chapels, crypts, apses, and so-called reliquary churches. The intended connections between relics and images in churches have not yet been thoroughly studied either. Emile Mâle has

argued that both the selection of pictures of saints and the locations and themes of stained glass windows can be directly related to the relics kept in the respective churches or chapels.[18] Indeed, a group of objects essentially related to reliquaries are the wooden sculptures and altarpieces into which relics were inserted – although they were not primarily intended to function as such. I suggest the term "secondary reliquaries" for these, but they will only be briefly discussed at the end of part II. Geographical holy places such as springs fall outside the topic as well.

The temporal and geographical limits imposed on this project mean that even certain reliquaries are excluded: for instance, those from Eastern Orthodox churches, even if they existed in parts of the medieval North such as Eastern Finland;[19] and reliquaries of apparent Scandinavian origin but with their entire usage history elsewhere, such as the so-called Cammin and Bamberg shrines in the tenth-century Danish Mammen style.[20] Meanwhile, temporal limits exclude those reliquaries that only arrived after the medieval period: such as the beautiful post-medieval reliquaries of the Counter-Reformation and later Nordic Catholic revivals;[21] or the medieval reliquaries that also arrived after the Reformation as war booty or pieces of antiquity. In most cases, the provenances of reliquaries in this last category are unknown – even the circumstances of their purchase for Nordic collections.[22] Two of them, however, deserve to be mentioned as

[18] Mâle 1961, 316–321. For more on a larger scale, the architecture of chapels or entire churches were created to house and present certain highly valued relics.

[19] For more on Orthodox pilgrimages in Karelia, see e.g. Parppei 2014, 341–357.

[20] See e.g. Tesch 2015, 16–18.

[21] One example is a small, book-shaped eighteenth-century reliquary of several saints in Växjö, Smålands Museum (http://www.sanktmikael.se/html/historia.htm). The Swedish History Museum in Stockholm has a seventeenth-century reliquary pendant, the origin of which is unknown (collection number HM 718). *Hallwylska museet* in Stockholm has a series of beautiful German reliquary crosses, which do not make part of the Nordic history of medieval reliquaries, but have been purchased later. See also Arponen 2018, 183–199, for an example in a Finnish collection.

[22] Certain objects have been recognised as former parts of famous medieval German collections of reliquaries: a reliquary cross in the Swedish History Museum has been traced back to the famous relic collection in Halle Cathedral, Germany, and two of the three medieval reliquaries belonging to the Falk Simon collection in the Röhsska Museum in Göteborg – a ciborium and a monstrance – have been identified as having

excellent examples of head reliquaries. In both cases, the background of their arrival in the North is documented. One is the thirteenth-century reliquary from Marburg, which arrived in the Swedish royal collection as war booty in 1632. It is a round, crown-like, structure with feet, containing gold and several gems, built to house the skull of St Elizabeth of Thüringen.[23] The other is a sixteenth-century wooden half-body bust of an unknown female saint, which was bought in Germany in the 19th century to be included in the Danish royal collection of ancient art.[24]

## 2 – Lost and Fragmented: On Material and Methodology

The primary material for this study consists of artefacts, images, and texts in the form of extant medieval reliquaries and mostly medieval visual and textual documents referring to lost reliquaries. They rarely coincide, are all given equal attention as objects of interpretation, and are complemented by secondary material consisting of archival sources, museum catalogues, and previous research publications.

A challenging and ever-present element in the study of medieval art and spirituality is those images and objets that are *lost*. Sometimes we know more about them than about those still known to exist. Although not an unusual situation in the research of ancient objects, dealing with lost and fragmented images, artefacts and sources still seems to lack a paradigmatic manual. Cynthia Hahn has aptly summarised the predicament: "We are thus engaged, it would seem, in the study of a series of objects that resist most of the categories of conventional art history. Their beauty is secondary, their originality suspect, and their meaning and contents often obscure. The dating of such composite objects is difficult and documentation often scanty or incomplete."[25]

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belonged to the Welfenschatz from Braunschweig. See Källström 1954, 399; Axel-Nilsson 1958, 22–23; 36–43.

[23] http://www.kringla.nu/kringla/objekt?referens=shm/object/41345

[24] Olsen 1980, 76–77. I hope to be able to extend my research to these objects in the future.

[25] Hahn 2012, 10.

Accepting these conditions, it is nevertheless possible to extract new information and produce new interpretations. T do so with respect to the medieval reliquaries in the Nordic countries is the aim of this thesis.

**Extant Objects and Museum Documentation**

Most of the surviving reliquaries now reside in museums: they are either neatly arranged for the viewer in an exhibition space or protectively packed away in storage rooms. In investigating the extant reliquaries in museums and churches, I had the opportunity to inspect more closely many of the central objects, particularly the head and arm reliquaries, in the Sigtuna church of St Mary, the Finnish Heritage Agency, Turku Cathedral Museum, the Danish National Museum, the National Gallery of Denmark, the Swedish History Museum, and the Oslo Museum of Cultural History; while for comparative material, I was allowed to study some of the collections of the Schnütgen Museum and the Church of St Ursula in Cologne.

Some of the reliquaries had been opened, examined and analysed, others were untouched since their arrival in the museum's collections. No new physical interventions were included in my project. The data concerning the recent material history of the objects was archived in the museums as unpublished catalogues, exhibition texts, conservation reports and research notes. These documents have proved a valuable source for this project. Thanks to the growth in digitisation and open access to archival materials, some – namely the archival notes for the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm – are already easy to consult online. The other relevant museum archives for this project were at the Danish National Museum and the National Gallery of Denmark in Copenhagen, the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo, and the National Board of Antiquities in Helsinki. The same museums house many of the remaining Nordic reliquaries. Nineteenth and twentieth-century archival sources concerning the remaining reliquaries were also found in the archives of the Swedish National Heritage Board (ATA) and Stockholm City Archives.

As mentioned above, the provenance of several extant reliquaries is unknown as they were donated to museums by collectors or bought from antiquity dealers without any accompanying information. Others were found in churches, where in some cases there are reasons

to assume they had remained since the Middle Ages, but there are also examples of some reliquaries having been transferred from one church to another. Finally, reliquaries have also been discovered underground: many reliquary pendants have been found near farms, indicating a possible connection to a landowner. An example of the various ways religious treasures end up being buried in fields is the Linköping treasure, which belonged to the cathedral but was buried to save the church silver from the threat of expropriation.[26]

**Illustrated and Depicted Reliquaries**

Besides its shape and contents, a third element contributing to a reliquary's perceived identity are the images on its surface. Sculpture, painting, enamel, engraving, embroidery, or relief are nearly always present, either as simply decorations, or as references to their contents or the wider cultic context. Images are more common on non-sculptural reliquaries such as caskets, but they also appear on some body-part reliquaries, often at the foot or base.[27]

The oldest and most common motif on a reliquary is the saint; from the 12th century on, narrative scenes of the legend, and the passion or death of a martyr began to appear as well.[28] Symbolic figures on reliquaries – loans from classical antiquity or references to local Nordic myths – would be employed for various reasons. Even ornaments without a symbolic or hagiographic function would at least visually represent the sacred.[29] Older caskets or parts of them were also reused in reliquaries, which is one of the ways pre-christian imagery entered into contact with relics and gained new meanings.[30] Also the presence of donors and commissioners, in the form of a portrait or coat of arms, was allowed in late medieval ecclesiastic art.

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[26] Reliquaries from the Linköping treasure will be discussed below in the sections on "*Cristallo*", sculptural reliquaries, arm reliquaries, and the Reformation.

[27] Braun 1940, 674.

[28] Braun 1940, 668; 671.

[29] For more on ornamentation in saints' shrines and sacred architecture, see Hahn 1997b, *Speculum* vol. 72: 1081–1084.

[30] Braun 1940, 601; 594–597. For more on the medieval ways of reusing and reinterpreting elements of the classical tradition, see e.g. Panofsky 1970, 4–5; 48–49, etc.; Kinney 2010, 233–252.

Donating not only meant investing in one's afterlife, but also promoting one's social status.[31]

Often the images on reliquaries are accompanied by a text: an inscription stating the contents of the reliquary or perhaps revealing its commissioner, and sometimes a prayer addressed to the saint. Also the relic, when visible through a window, is often accompanied by a name tag of parchment, known as an *authentica*, with the saint's name. The text in a medieval image (or reliquary) specifies its meaning and adds to its interpretation.[32] Literature historian Seeta Chaganti has analysed the interplay of these texts and the spoken word in the performative character of reliquaries. The inscription was not necessarily spoken out loud or sung in church, but contemplated in silence; in its "self-conscious materiality", it complemented the visual and verbal message of the reliquary.[33]

Images of reliquaries are among the primary sources for this study, too. Illustrated catalogues of church treasures, like those from popular churches of pilgrimage in Central Europe, have not survived in the Nordic Countries, but reliquaries are occasionally depicted in Nordic wall paintings and altarpieces. The documentary value of medieval images is limited for several reasons; identifying the objects as reliquaries is not always certain, and even images clearly depicting reliquaries are ambiguous. If the portrayed object no longer exists, will the image tell us how it looked or simply indicate its genre? Is the image a reference to an object that existed or an allusion to something imagined, events that never took place? Medieval iconography operates with certain generic representations of common things – towns, churches, monks, reliquaries, for instance – but from the 14th century onwards, it increasingly shows signs of more realistic observation, such as – in this case – individual characteristics of the church or reliquary portrayed. In either case, existing depictions of reliquaries are a valuable addition to the limited set of sources. Even without directly portraying existing reliquaries, they contribute to the understanding of how reliquaries were perceived and where their

[31] See e.g. Tuhkanen 2008, 7–12; 135–153.
[32] Schmitt 1996, 31.
[33] Chaganti 2008, 1–18.

representations were needed. Complemented with surviving written documents, they can also be useful in sketching the appearances of lost reliquaries and how they were placed and treated.[34]

Seals and pilgrimage signs often show a strongly simplified image of the saint or cult site, but in some cases the images have been interpreted as depicting a reliquary bust or a chapel-shaped reliquary casket; seal images are often more generic than faithful in their rendering of the reliquaries. In sculptures and paintings, when saints are depicted holding monstrance-like objects, they are referring more to the Eucharist or the Adoration than to relics, and miniature churches, resembling chapel-shaped caskets, are usually symbols of the saint's patronage of a church.

**Reliquaries in Medieval Documents**

Surviving written evidence of medieval reliquaries in the North are more numerous than actual objects. Medieval and early modern written documents are the only source for many lost reliquaries, whereas they are not much help for those reliquaries that do still exist. One of the reasons is that the connection of existing reliquaries to specific churches, donors, or commissioners are currently not known. Post-medieval documents in museum or church archives concerning these objects have also been consulted whenever possible. The situation here is thus rather different from that of Central or Southern Europe, where the people and processes behind several reliquaries are known in rich detail.[35]

Reliquaries are mentioned in documents such as wills, account books, inventories, letters, chronicles, miracle collections and translation reports. They were written mainly in Latin or in the vernacular Nordic languages. Most of them have already been published and edited; thus I have based most of my work on these editions, while also consulting photographic copies of the originals whenever possible. The translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

All available and relevant written sources are used here for mapping Nordic reliquaries, but their different origins and contexts need to be assessed before interpreting them. Two texts referring to

[34] On the epistemology of medieval images, see Liepe 2003c, 415–430.
[35] See e.g. Coda 2005, 73–84; Boehm 1997, 8–19.

the same type of object may reveal very different aspects of it: while one text documents the size and material of the object, the other may be more useful in shedding light on medieval attitudes towards that type of object. The truth value of both fictional and historical documents also varies, and especially when the described objects no longer exist, it is difficult to verify either the details or even whether the objects ever actually existed. It can be trusted that reliquaries mentioned, for instance, in instructions for their ostension at relic feasts did exist, as well as those listed in confiscation documents for church silver expropriated during the Reformation. However, the existence of reliquaries mentioned in miracle accounts may justifiably be doubted – but nevertheless, the fact they are mentioned is relevant. The way the objects were described, whether true or false, influenced the way saints and their material and visual presence were perceived.

A history of medieval reliquaries relies on medieval written sources: not only do they make us aware of the variety of reliquaries and their contents, but also tell us – albeit fragmentarily – about different moments in the biographies of the artefacts. Their commissioning, making, donation, placement, and transferral inside and outside the church; their physical contact with clergy or pilgrims; and eventually their repair, adornment, and destruction can be discerned through these written sources, even if many pieces of information have since disappeared. In most cases, indeed, only one aspect in the history of an object can be found in the documents.

When the life and miracles of a saint were praised in legends and liturgical poetry, it was their relics rather than the reliquaries that got attention. Yet, reliquaries also had a role to play in the development of the legend and cult. Historians have sometimes speculated about possible connections between miracles or other passages in the legend of a saint and particular, existing relics or reliquaries of that saint, suggesting for instance that certain passages were written in order to legitimise or authenticate those cult objects. I will also pay attention to elements apparently describing relics or reliquaries in the legends, particularly in the context of body-part reliquaries, yet bearing in mind that correlations of this kind are impossible to verify with certainty.

When the cult status of the saint became official, it was time for the *translatio* (transferral) of relics from the saint's tomb into new

reliquaries more apt for cultic display. Translation reports can be revealing sources on the appearance, content, and treatment of reliquaries. They sometimes include descriptions of 'old' and 'new' reliquaries and show how the 'old' ones are treated after being substituted. Indulgence letters may also refer to the shrine or casket of a saint and be our only hint as to its existence, but they usually do not dwell on details. In a *processionarium*, the relic processions of saints' days are described.[36] Reliquaries owned by private people are mentioned in wills and letters, while account books and diaries (from churches and abbeys) contain references to reliquary acquisitions, sales, repairs, donations or appearance in celebrations. One literary genre less related to cultic practices are historical chronicles, where reliquaries are mentioned if they were involved in political events or the life of public figures.[37] Abbeys and cathedrals had a concentration of relics and reliquaries that was both larger and better documented than collections in smaller parish churches and chapels, so the majority of surviving reliquaries and written documents about them come from these centres.

In medieval Europe, the quantity of relics in a church was a matter of prestige. Although pilgrimages to churches were mostly made to visit a specific holy corpse or miraculous image, those with a large collection of relics were also attractive destinations for pilgrims due to the *virtus* (the power of God manifested in or mediated through the saints) accumulated there and the many available indulgences that often accompanied this. Such collections were documented in lists, sometimes including also reliquaries, sometimes not.

Inventories or treasure lists of the objects belonging to churches and altars can be concise to the point of being vague, but in some cases the descriptions are extended to a few words. Some items are explicitly named as reliquaries, while others are more ambiguous. Some images of saints, for instance, may be reliquaries, but they are

[36] Ferm 1986, 221–250.

[37] Chronicles and diaries, in particular, reflect the variations in political relations and attitudes; see e.g. DV / Gejrot 1988, 28. This may have been one of the many factors that led the authors to inflate, deflate or even omit the descriptions of donated objects, such as reliquaries.

not specified as such.[38] Even lists that seem long and complete may not include all relics or reliquaries of a church.[39] Cataloguing of treasures must have been the custom in most cathedrals and monasteries or convents and even in smaller churches, but only few lists are known today. For instance, no reliquary list exists from Turku Cathedral, although a large number of relics have survived; instead, two individual inventories of altar prebends are preserved, and both of them include reliquaries.[40]

The accuracy and attention to detail in most lists varies, for which there can be several different explanations, such as the personal or institutional interests of the author, lack of sufficient information, lacunary or misinterpreted older documents that were used as sources for new lists, and so on. In 1427, the author of the inventory in the Church of Our Lady in Visby, Gotland, identified only one relic in the list – the most sacred – a fragment of the Holy Cross. For the rest of the items, a distinction is made between reliquaries that "contain relics" or are "full of relics".[41]

The clearest impression of the scale and diversity of relics and reliquaries in Nordic churches, and the terminology related to them, can be obtained from lists specifically dedicated to reliquaries, but sadly only a few survive. They are documents produced within the church, by experts who knew the relics and reliquaries well and held them in high esteem. However, their style is often obscure and sometimes unsystematic. The lists were intended either for the custodians or for an audience – possibly to be read aloud during annual relic processions. Some of the largest relic collections in

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[38] See e.g. Fett 1909, 145–147; Ribe Oldemoder, 114–116; DN 13:569. For other Norwegian lists with no reliquaries, see Nicolaysen 1862–1866, 428; DN 4:1074.

[39] In British churches, the contents of a relic aumbry or cupboard that had their own responsible custodian (feretrar or shrine-keeper) were listed separately; see St John Hope 1907, 417–418.

[40] REA 579 (no date); REA 584 (no date).

[41] "*2 Sölffkar, der Helligdom er udi; 2 Bysser aff Elphenbeen, der Helligdom er udi; En Kiste fuld aff Helligdom; En Budicke aff Sölff, med Helligdom; En Monstranz fuld med Helligdom; 3 Monstranzer fulde aff Helligdom; It lidet Kaars aff purt Guld, hvor udi findes det Træ, som Christus er död paa.*" Strelow 1978 (1633), 201–205. I believe the word Helligdom, used without any article, can in this case be both singular and plural.

Central Europe were documented with illustrated catalogues in the early 16th century: famous examples are the *Wittenberger Heiltumsbuch*, illustrated by Lucas Cranach, and the *Hallesche Heiltumsbuch*. No illustrated catalogues are known from the north, but the most informative lists are from four Danish churches: the Franciscan abbey churches in Copenhagen and Roskilde, the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, and Lund Cathedral. The lists for the latter two were written in preparation for relic feasts, indicating the order for the display of reliquaries.

Ironically, many reliquaries are nowadays only known from sixteenth-century confiscation lists – the Protestant Reformation created documents of the objects it destroyed. A large number of confiscation documents survive from Sweden, but fewer from Denmark and Norway. Confiscation lists only count reliquaries made of valuable metals, mainly registering their material and weight. In confiscation lists, as well as inventories or wills, reliquaries were in a minority among several other kinds of objects. However, when interpreting medieval lists, it is also worth bearing in mind that the amount of treasures was not only accumulating until the confiscations: already during the medieval period reliquaries had also been lost, stolen, or broken.

**Interpreting the Absent and Uncertain**

Relics, reliquaries, or documents referring to them have only been preserved from approximately a tenth of the 6400 Nordic churches thought to have existed in the Middle Ages. Each of them probably had at least one relic inside an altar, and the relic would have been acknowledged in some way in the imagery and cult of the church – though not necessarily elevated to a central role. Most churches would also have had at least one reliquary, though there are few mentions of them apart from those in the largest cathedrals and famous shrines. Cathedrals, larger churches, and abbeys had dozens, if not hundreds of reliquaries. Probably over 6000 lost reliquaries have thus disappeared without a trace, together with the documents referring to them – they have been destroyed by fires, refashioned into new objects, sold, stolen, hidden, thrown away, or forgotten. The fate of other medieval church silver utensils is no better: art historian Thor Kielland calculated that about 2000 chalices and patens existed in

medieval Norwegian churches, of which only 50 chalices and 30 patens remain. Of the estimated 1000 Norwegian monstrances that were once thought to exist, nothing remains except for two separate parts.[42]

Every remaining relic and reliquary in the Nordic countries has lost something of its essence, whether it be the contents, the carefully crafted container, or their name. The reliquary function of some objects is uncertain. Unlike the wall paintings and sculptures of saints in some Nordic medieval churches, reliquaries have seldom been manipulated, intentionally broken, or modernised since the Middle Ages. Instead, signs of wear and tear can be found. A typical intervention made to surviving reliquaries is a careful opening by a researcher or conservator. Even if a reliquary has been studied, its provenance is usually unknown. It can neither be interpreted in the context of a local cult or the iconographic cycles of a particular church space, nor compared to other works by the same master or other pieces commissioned by the same patron. In many cases, it cannot even be identified as representing a specific saint. The various contexts have been lost.

Those reliquaries that have survived, both Nordic and from elsewhere, are inevitably obliged to somehow "represent" all those that are now lost – some clearly better than others – and the selection is thus rather random. Writing about lost objects brings out other issues, too: more than half of the material consists of fragmentary mentions of lost reliquaries. How should these inaccessible, absent, and mysterious objects be treated? Should they be related to existing ones? Although they might give valuable clues, it is necessary to keep in mind that looking at surviving items to better imagine those lost can also be misleading or, as Olle Källström points out, even meaningless.[43] Still, having access to some objects is better for visualising this lost diversity than none at all, and I will use them to make speculative comparisons.

Lost objects may be a puzzling topic to write about, but it is not a new one. As art historian Michael Ann Holly has stated, "[i]mages

[42] Sølver 1929, 51–52.
[43] Källström 1939, 3.

that can no longer be seen, only imagined, have been part of the history of art for a very long time." They are not necessarily any more puzzling than existing ones either.[44] Analysing the complexity of contemporary art historical writing, James Elkins suggests that

> [it] may be a response to the apparently unstable ontology of pictures, in that pictures may be understood as objects that appear 'lost' and make us think of returning them to words and to the world. By their nature they may [be] kindling a hope that we might restore them to the places, texts and contexts we think they must once have had.[45]

Elkins is referring to a different kind of loss, mainly that of context, and considers that any attempt to restore it is based on false hopes. With my material, impregnated as it is by more than one sense of loss, this kind of attempt to restore reliquaries and their contexts, lost or not, is certainly one motivation for my thesis.

Description of both lost and existing objects is necessary before they are interpreted. The tone and precision of the description dictates the limits of interpretation, or as art historian Michael Baxandall puts it, regarding historical explanation in art history, "description is the mediating object of explanation."[46]

Many of the surviving reliquaries, objects, or medieval texts lack parts that would make their meaning immediately intelligible, or they are damaged due to poor storage conditions, repairs of varying quality, or other reasons. This means their description and analysis will never be a true rendering of their original or ideal state. Relics themselves are fragments by definition; yet, as surviving bones or bundles from a lost reliquary, they become isolated, anonymous, and difficult to interpret. They may have been a visible part of the reliquary's appearance if there was a window, and yet, in themselves, they are not very helpful as clues to the lost reliquary, except indicating a minimum size limit.

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[44] Holly 1996, 1. For more on the lost immediacy or context of artworks from the past, see also e.g. Holly 2013, 73–94.
[45] Elkins 1999, 15–16.
[46] Baxandall 1985, 1–11.

The fragmentary nature of historical material is inevitable. In the 1990s, this was underlined, among others, by Didi-Huberman, claiming that art history had often operated as if a complete, flawlessly certain "diagnosis" of its topics were possible. Instead, he called for a more modest attitude towards the inherent fragility and lacunary character of historical knowledge. Beside modesty, Didi-Huberman also called for courage: the art historian should move forward with the sources available, use one's imagination, interpret the object in its materiality, and take the risk of making interpretations that cannot be verified.[47] With the present material, his advice seems indeed like the only possible approach: fragile and fragmentary are words that aptly describe much of the objects or sources here, and the interpretations (texts or images) made of them. Words like "maybe", "possibly", "perhaps", and "probably" are omnipresent. I may not "move forward" from the sources quite as boldly as Didi-Huberman in my interpretations, but imagination is certainly an essential tool in dealing with absent artefacts, when in some cases we cannot even confirm that they actually existed. Nevertheless, it is good to remember that this kind of approach is actually not radically different from the iconography-based art history, at which Didi-Huberman's criticism was aimed, since it was not that stiff or blind to contextual questions, as Lena Liepe, Elina Räsänen and others have underlined in a recent anthology.[48]

One methodological approach not used here, despite its relevance, is the pursuit of exact dating based on material analysis. When previous research provides such results, these are taken into account, but are marginal to the main aims of this project. In this respect, I hope that later on my findings and conclusions can be usefully combined with the knowledge gained by natural scientific methods, possibly substituting some of the uncertainties with certainties concerning the surviving objects.

[47] Didi-Huberman 1990, 10, 29–49. See also e.g. Baxandall 1985, VII; Aavitsland 2003, 53–63; Liepe 2003, 171–186.
[48] See e.g. Räsänen 2018, 46–66.

## 3 – Visual, Material and Social Issues: Relic and Reliquary

Understanding the appearances and functions of reliquaries is preconditioned by the visual and material logic of the medieval cult of saints, the concept of presence, and reliquaries' roles as artefacts in social interaction. Naturally, some reserve is required in approaching any of these vast issues – at least as a question in parenthesis, as used by the historian Valentin Groebner in introducing his topics: "'The Body' (whose body, anyway?) and 'the image' of violence (was there only one?)".[49] Although late-medieval spirituality has been characterised as a period of increased visual emphasis, as Caroline Walker Bynum has stated, matter and objects were simultaneously at the core of religious experience.[50] In this chapter, I present the theoretical and conceptual background for the analysis of reliquaries as material and visual containers and mediators of the saints' presence, experienced in social interaction.

### In the Presence

The saints venerated in a medieval church existed in several different senses: their death meant a birth to the eternal, heavenly life; they could live on in the minds of people through folklore and legends; and finally, they persisted in visual and material traces, images, cult locations, and holy objects like relics. This third kind of existence can be summarised as material presence. The sites of material presence were the destinations of pilgrimages.

Behind the concept of material presence is the thought, appearing both in lay religiosity and ecclesiastic practices, that the saint is concretely present in each relic.[51] In German research, this presence has been defined as "real presence" (*Realpräsenz*), following the theology of communion. Christ is considered to be present in the host; at the moment of communion, each piece of it is his complete body.[52]

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[49] Groebner 2004, 15.

[50] Bynum 2011, 19–21.

[51] Kroos 1985, 38; Angenendt 1997, 111–115; 149–158.

[52] Dinzelbacher 1990, 116; Diedrichs 2001, 149–158. The discussion on communion and transsubstatiation is naturally more complicated than described above, but that falls outside the topic of this chapter.

Similarly, in the cult of saints, as Vitricius of Rouen expressed it, *ubi est aliquid ibi totum est*; where there is something [a part of a saint], there is the whole [of the saint].[53] Each fragment of a saint in a reliquary can be considered to be the whole saint, and to contain their saintly power (*virtus*) – essentially God's power manifest through them. The holiness and thaumaturgical capacity of saints are also their reward for moral and spiritual strength and leading a virtuous life.[54]

The presence of a saint was most concrete in corporeal relics, at least for laypeople. These are the primary relics, *reliqui insigni*. Secondary relics were items related to the martyrdom of saints or their personal belongings such as clothes, which were already being sought after while saints were still alive.[55] Finally, there were contact relics, such as sand and oil from graves, and the water of holy wells, which were sanctified by simply having touched primary or secondary relics. As only wealthy people had access to primary relics from the church, these contact relics were the only ones available for the majority.[56]

Images, relics and sacred places have their own characteristics as material objects of cult, although their functions, seen from the pilgrim's point of view, can be rather similar. Art historian Hans Belting underlines the role of painted and sculpted images of the saint as containers of a visual and physical presence that enable the cult to take place in the present; a different aspect of the cult is remembering the acts and life of the saint through narrative images or stories.[57] Indeed, reliquaries as cult objects may contain both these dimensions,

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[53] Angenendt 1997, 154–155.

[54] Vauchez 1981, 499–514; 583–622; Angenendt 1997, 78–80; 155–158; Boesch Gajano 1999, 22–28.

[55] Bruni 1999, 262.

[56] Bruni 1999, 264–266; Blick 2014, 110–115. For more on the production of textile relics in Rome during the era of Gregory the Great, see McCulloh 1980, 313–320. On the significance of non-corporeal relics in the early Middle Ages, see also Herrmann-Mascard 1975, 41–49, 65–70.

[57] Belting 1994, 1–16. Belting's importance in the study of medieval art is unquestionable, but his approach has also been challenged as confirming medieval art's peripheral status in art history; see e.g. Betancourt 2017, 5–17. In my work, too, Belting's work is often referred to, but the question of reliquaries' art status is not central here.

when the corporeal presence of the relics is accompanied by the visual presence shaped by the reliquary and narrative images or texts that record essential past events in the saint's life. However, Cynthia Hahn argues that early medieval reliquaries "work against the power of a particular presence" and "relentlessly point elsewhere to indicate a primary locus of meaning".[58] Still, I would say they could only do that with the particular authority bestowed by the presence of relics.

Belting also recognises a different kind of presence related to icons: "The *bodily presence* of a patron saint now in heaven could also be sensed as one stood before an icon, in which the saint's features were preserved so that he or she could be recognized and perceived as reality."[59] In other words, bodily presence was, for him, something that could, in the case of icons, be conveyed by visual means without the actual relics of the saint's body. Through such a presence, certain devotional images have in effect gained the status of relic, and miracles are attributed to them. In vernacular Catholic traditions, individual relics and cult images have had their own singular character and effect even if they stood for the same saint. This was criticised by medieval thinkers, who pointed out that the value of relics or images is purely symbolic – to help the worshipper to remember the saint in heaven through whose mediation God's miracles happen.[60] According to Thomas Aquinas, relics were signs pointing towards God. The saint's soul was not present in the relic, but would resurrect and reunite with it in the end.[61]

**Material Bodies**

The concept of material presence in reliquaries was already touched upon above: relics themselves are material tokens of the saint's existence, and yet they need the different material surface provided by a reliquary. The meaning through materiality contributed by reliquaries consists of concrete details, such as size, shape, weight, surface structure, colour, and the materials used in their making.[62] As

[58] Hahn 2012, 109–110.
[59] Belting 1994, 61 (italics mine); see also 299–303.
[60] Angenendt 1997, 78–80; 115–119; 242–244; 165–166.
[61] Bynum 2011, 154–156.
[62] See also Lahti & Räsänen 2008, 241–269.

art historian Michael Yonan has stated, the perspective of material culture, indispensable to contemporary art history, has in fact been built in to the study of medieval art for several decades, albeit not quite in the same sense as in what has traditionally been understood as "material culture studies". Yonan observes that the more recent material turn has made art historians once more conscious of images as objects with material dimensions that are both separate from and essentially connected with their meanings or contents. [63] The importance of seeing the difference between the image – as an object – and what it represents was already pointed out by Thomas Aquinas, and Aristotle before him.[64] In medieval reliquaries, the material object dimension is inevitably present and impossible to overlook. They are never exclusively images, although visuality is their means of communication. Instead, there seems to have been a tendency for a merging or slippage of meaning between the reliquaries and their contents - the physical contents, which they also represented. Bynum, whose work has essentially contributed to the understanding of the material dimensions of medieval culture, has summarised the meaning of "matter" in medieval culture as the stuff through which God acts and is revealed, while materiality also is "the stuff and condition of human existence medieval theorists struggled with such sophistication to understand." [65] It could be added that matter or materiality is of course the stuff and condition of the visual expression in reliquaries as well as one of the inevitable components for their interpretation.

In the 12th century, Thiofrid of Echternach compared relics in a reliquary to the soul in the body: a power that cannot be seen but that "works its wonders therein".[66] Reliquary and relic are to each other, indeed, like body and soul: one cannot function without the other. The idea of the reliquary as the "new body" of the saint dates back at least to Paulinus of Nola in the 5th century. It refers to the shining and incorruptible body for eternal life that was gained at the resurrection. The reliquaries were to be made of materials reflecting such

[63] Yonan 2011, 232–248. See also Lahti 2011, 30–34.
[64] See, e.g., Wirth 1996, 54.
[65] Bynum 2011, 31–36.
[66] Quoted in Hahn 2012, 24.

qualities.[67] If the concept of this "new body" were to be taken literally, however, most reliquaries would fall short of expectations. Few reliquaries contain the whole body of a saint, and few are shaped as a whole body. Equally few reliquaries contain and represent the relics of just one saint either.

The authority of a reliquary or relic to represent the entire body of a saint is based on the concept of *pars pro toto*: the complete presence of a saint is contained in each body-part.[68] The principle applies as much to reliquaries as to relics, but in a slightly different sense. A reliquary can contain the presence of one saint or several saints, but each relic only belongs to one saint. Reliquaries very seldom visually represent the entire body of the saint, but body-part reliquaries (such as heads and arms) might come closer to representing, if not a new body, at least a new limb. As Bynum also points out, body-part reliquaries rather underline than disguise the character of relics as severed or fragmented body parts: "Reliquaries glorify and sublimate partition. What they deny is putrefaction."[69]

Several reliquaries have no name in medieval inventories, although the multiple relics inside them are identified in detail. What is the relation between relic and reliquary in those items? Some of it can be understood according to the historian Amy C. Remensnyder's interpretation:

Here the relationship between contained parts and visible whole bespeaks the power of the reliquary to determine and transform the identity of its contents. There are many relics inside, but the viewer sees only one saint. A certain disjunction between reliquary and relics is then possible, one hinting that displacement of meaning from relic to reliquary is also possible.[70]

All the other relics complement the one elected to give the reliquary and its contents a common identity; and yet they do not lose their own identity, because they keep their *authentica* and are

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[67] Hahn 2010, 292–293; Bynum 2011, 184; Bagnoli 2011, 137–147. See also Bynum 1995, 201–212.

[68] See e.g. Belting 1994, 299; Angenendt 1997, 154; Bynum 2012 (1991), 11–12; see also Lahti 2014.

[69] Bynum 2011, 185.

[70] Remensnyder 1996, 890.

meticulously catalogued in relic lists. Their multitude and diversity heightens the value of the one saint representing them all. When the reliquary represents Christ but contains other relics as well, the unity is of a particular kind:

> But the saints in heaven were not just with Christ; they were actually one with him corporeally (*unicorpores*), a relationship Vitricius of Rouen eloquently and elegantly puzzled over late in the fourth century and that Guibert of Nogent flatly stated in the twelfth. […] He is the whole of which all relics are a part.[71]

The ideal materials for protecting and presenting the relics must, naturally, also be incorruptible, light-reflecting, and precious: in other words, gold, silver, gems, or crystals. They were also references to resurrection, to the heavenly Jerusalem built of those materials, and to the resurrected body, which was described exactly like a reliquary may have literally been – golden, shining and incorruptible.[72] Their characteristic capacity to shine, reflect and amplify the available light makes them powerful visual instruments.[73] As Remensnyder writes, "[t]he gold, silver, and precious stones of the reliquary interpreted that fragment and revealed to the viewer what could not be seen even were the relic visible: the other and true nature of the saintly body, intact and glorified in heaven, reigning with Christ."[74] However, the use of precious, luxury materials for reliquaries was not praised by everyone. In his *Apologia* (1125), Bernard of Clairvaux criticises the way churches were using impressive reliquaries and images to increase donations which were then being used to make these even more luxurious rather than help the poor. In the Gothic period, the high price of materials used in churches became more problematic and associated with avarice.[75]

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[71] Remensnyder 1996, 889–890.
[72] Hahn 2010a, 292⊚293; 309. Bynum 2011, 184. Bagnoli 2011, 137⊚147; Kollandsrud 2014, 52; Aavitsland 2007, 79-91.
[73] Schmitt 2002, 285–287.
[74] Remensnyder 1996, 889–890.
[75] Camille 1991, 259–262.

When reliquaries were made of humbler materials, the more expensive could be imitated by carved and painted surfaces. A window of transparent crystal or glass could be substituted by a lattice or door providing access or a vantage point to the contents within. In this way, less precious metals, wood, bone, and textiles could be shaped to express and transform their contents. The differences in materials used was clearly an economic, and in some cases, class issue.[76] However, the reliquaries made of cheaper materials were not necessarily inferior in value. Equally as important as the materials were the skills of the artisan working to get the noblest form out of them.[77] Conservator Kaja Kollandsrud has stated this in her work on Norwegian medieval wooden sculpture: the craftsmen knew their materials extremely well and were able to give the sculptures a lustrous finish, so that they would appear to be made of textiles, metal, or stone, to the extent that they were possibly more impressive than if they were of gold alone.[78] Nevertheless, the attention of art historians has been largely drawn to those reliquaries made of more lustrous and expensive materials.

As Cynthia Hahn has pointed out, for many centuries in the early Middle Ages, reliquaries obscured the relics inside.[79] The relic itself, as a shapeless and ambiguous fragment wrapped or sewn in cloth (usually silk) to shield it from sight, appears radically different from the refined look of the reliquary. The visual presence of the relic was not intended to impress as such; it needed to be accompanied by the words or images of the *martyrium* or life story. The relic was simply proof that the saint had once been a mortal like us. But what kind of proof was it, if the relic was present and yet hidden, completely wrapped in a cloth? Apparently, the shape of the bone-bundle was convincing enough, at least when confirmed by an *authentica*. The importance and authority of the *authentica*, often hidden away for decades or centuries with the relic in an altar niche or reliquary casket, becomes crucial when the reliquary is opened. Even the sceptical Guibert de Nogent writes how the dispute between two churches,

[76] Blick 2014, 110–115.
[77] Summers 2003, 84–86.
[78] Kollandsrud 2014, 51–66.
[79] Hahn 2005, 239.

each in possession of a body claimed to be of St Firmin, was instantly resolved when the *authentica* was found in the nostril of one of the bodies.[80]

Identifying a bone as a relic was necessary to transform it from something abhorrent into a powerful and sacred object.[81] In the 12th century, Thiofrid of Echternach assumed that seeing the relics would horrify people. Christ, in his view, had "persuaded the sons of the Church to conceal and shelter the relics of the saint's happy flesh in gold and in the most precious of natural materials so that they will not be horrified by looking at a cruel and bloody thing".[82] In the following centuries, though, blood, death and suffering was becoming part of the imagery in late-medieval churches. During the 13th century, a new interpretation of relics emerged; it became increasingly important to see the relic itself through a crystal window or entirely transparent reliquary – "speaking" reliquaries were no longer enough. As Belting puts it, at this point the reliquary became a frame for the relic.[83]

**Sensory Devotion**

Reliquaries gain their meaning from the relics they protect, display, incorporate and visualise. They are the vessels which, in Remensnyder's words, "determine, interpret and transform" their contents.[84] There are countless ways of doing this, as we see in the diversity of reliquaries reflecting the changes in the cults and art surrounding them in the Middle Ages. As the cult of saints increasingly moved on from the paleochristian graveside and into churches themselves, it became acceptable and finally even obligatory to bring holy corpses or their fragments into these new places of worship. From the tombs of saints in the crypt below, relics began to emerge and spread into the church and onto altars. As relics were not allowed to be exposed as such, reliquaries were needed to protect and display them.[85] During the development of the cult, reliquaries took

[80] Guibertus de Novigento 1993, 103.
[81] Geary 1988, 201.
[82] Quoted in Bagnoli 2011, 137.
[83] Belting 1994, 183; see also Camille 1996, 104.
[84] Remensnyder 1996, 189.
[85] *Reliquiae amodo extra capsam non ostendatur*, from the 62nd decree of the fourth Lateran Council in 1215. For more on the discussion, see Diedrichs 2001, 10–14.

on new shapes, diversifying from sarcophagi and transportable ampullae to artfully made caskets, crosses, sculptures, and monstrances of multiple shape and colour. The relic became a visual element in reliquaries that might be transparent (especially from the 14th century) and could "speak", open, and close.[86] Cynthia Hahn has suggested that open reliquaries and ambulatories built for pilgrims were a reaction to the previous tradition of closed crypts and tombs – restricted and controlled by the clergy.[87] In controlling whether relics are hidden or not (via lids or doors), reliquaries partly play with the same dichotomies as winged altarpieces.[88] These techniques of display have been explained by the late-medieval "holy need to see", which was also served by "*imagines monstrantes*".[89] In art historian Michael Camille's view, the development went so far that

> the line between relic and the reliquary, like that between the icon and the picture, began to blur. […] As time went by holy parts came more and more to be displayed in transparent containers, or, somewhat contrarily, were framed by so much richness that […] they were almost obliterated.[90]

In their own illness and suffering, people sought help from the saints whose suffering they had learned of in the church.[91] The ultimate model for each saint's physical suffering is the body of Christ – elevated and consumed in the host, translated into images and prayers, each of his five wounds venerated and full of symbolism, and made visible and tangible by life-size sculptures. Like these images of suffering bodies, visible relics in transparent reliquaries evoked not only the mortal humanity of the saint, but also a contact reminiscent of the ocular communion – an experience medieval authors referred to

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[86] See e.g. Vauchez 1981, 524–529; Angenendt 1997, 183–189.

[87] Hahn 1997b, 1079–1106, particularly 1105–1106.

[88] The reasons for being opened or closed were nevertheless not identical: see Belting 1994, 449.

[89] See Lohfert Jørgensen 2004, 113–129; Belting 1994, 303.

[90] Camille 1996, 104.

[91] For more on Nordic healing pilgrimages, see e.g. Kuuliala 2014, 181–195. For pilgrimages based on other kinds of help, see e.g. Katajala-Peltomaa 2014, 163–179.

as touching the object with one's eyes.[92] Seeing had a strong, physical meaning in the medieval religious experience. Many medieval theologians defined the gaze as a kind of touch, in which the seen physically affects the eye and mind. The cult of saints implies a mutual gaze: the saint is seen and looks back, hearing and answering prayers and doubts.[93]

Other senses were involved as well: sound was almost perpetual element in encounters with relics – relic processions and ostensions were accompanied by hymns that became familiar even to those who did not understand Latin. For the tactile perception of a reliquary, its shape and material were essential. On specific occasions, reliquaries were not only carried and touched, but also kissed – and smelled. One widespread hagiographic *topos* is the lovely scent emitted by relics: in contrast to normal dead corpses, the remains of saints can be recognised by the scent of flowers. This has both a theological and practical explanation. Theologically, the scent would refer to the garden of Paradise, where the saints reside, and an indication of their heavenly virtue, symbolised particularly by roses and lilies.[94] On a practical level, earthly flowers and herbs were also involved in embalming holy corpses. They would be washed or boiled in herb-scented water or wine to facilitate their preservation and transport. Fragrant waxes and oils were used to treat relics, too.[95]

Another relevant aspect in experiencing reliquaries – and religious artefacts in general – is emotion. This is not unrelated to the sensory sphere, as their material shape and presence would inspire a variety of emotions and "bother" viewers, as art historian Elina Gertsman observes in her recent article.[96]

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[92] Bynum 2011, 19; 289; 308.

[93] For discussion on this, see e.g. Biernoff 2002, 133–135; Kroos 1985, 39; Angenendt 1997, 183–189; Dinzelbacher 1990, 124–134.

[94] Angenendt 1997, 119–122. For more on the functions of the olfactory in medieval religious experience, see Lohfert Jørgensen 2016, 153–167.

[95] Pope Boniface VIII prohibited the boiling in the late 13th century, but it was soon resumed, probably due to a lack of alternatives. The same method was also used for the remains of other individuals of high status. See Räsänen 2017, 123–125.

[96] Gertsman 2018, 27–42.

**Artefacts in Interaction**

Sensory and emotional experiences are closely linked to moments of interaction between people and reliquaries, which is the topic of part III in this dissertation. While relics were perceived as the concrete presence of saints, visibly and tangibly demonstrating the power of God, they were also objects of remarkable economic value, and their routes from one owner to another are highly illustrative of the material aspects of medieval spirituality. They were produced, sold, donated, and stolen; and their price was high, which made them a sort of luxury item, although they only looked as such when inside a reliquary.[97] Reliquaries were, however, among the most valuable artefacts of their time, often created by the most skilful artisans using the best available materials. One perspective for approaching that aspect of their existence can be found in the previously mentioned anthology "The Social Life of Things" by Appadurai. By virtue of being made, used, bought, or given, material things participate in human interaction – changing their status as humans give them different functions and meanings. As commodities, they are not themselves subjects that socially interact, but Appadurai proposes a "methodological fetishism" for concentrating on the things themselves. Since then, it has generally become more common in artefact studies to talk about the agency of things.[98]

Long before these twentieth-century theories, interaction between lifeless things and people was considered an everyday matter. According to Aristotle and medieval Aristotelians, such as Thomas Aquinas, sense perception took place through ordinary objects and their properties acting upon our sense organs. Things made us see, hear, smell, or feel them by causing a change in our potentially receptive senses (or sense organs).[99]Whether this Aristotelian activity qualifies as a social life will no doubt remain a topic of discussion, but at least one group of material objects was reported as being capable of interacting with people in the Middle Ages – relics, reliquaries, and

[97] Geary 1988, 169–194. For more on luxury related to reliquaries, see Immonen 2009.

[98] For an evaluation of the concept of agency in the study of medieval objects, see Bynum 2011, 280–284; see also Cole 2013, 106–118.

[99] Knuuttila 2008, 1–22. This was true even for those who did not accept this fully passive account of perception – on this, see Silva 2014, 117–146.

devotional images. In legends and miracle accounts, they were described as having both agency and intentions. Bynum reminds us that the medieval view of matter was not based on a strict division between animate and inanimate objects – particularly when it came to holy matter which was seen to have its own concrete life and agency that was not metaphorical.[100] Historian Patrick Geary has, for instance, shown how thefts of medieval relics were often perceived as having been instigated by the relics themselves.[101]

This interactive aspect in the social life of relics and reliquaries has been aptly characterised by Renate Kroos in her 1985 article "*Vom Umgang mit Reliquien*". The word "*Umgang*" has a number of meanings in German: "contact", "dealings", "social interaction" and – best of all perhaps – "procession". In the cult context, relics were perceived to play an active part. When they were addressed with prayers, gestures, and gifts, they responded – or more precisely, the saints responded via the relics. In a more general sense, they also contributed to the local collective identity of their community by bringing people together.[102] Finally, the coexistence of reliquaries with each other and with various other liturgical vessels as well as religious images in the church space can also be understood in terms of interaction; this particular interaction is not discussed here, but it is a topic that deserves further investigation.

## 4 – Previous Research: Art history, History, and Archaeology

Reliquaries are items of interest for historians, art historians, archaeologists, theologians, and pilgrims (or tourists) alike. They are often viewed in relation to the cult of a specific saint, to the cult context in a church, or to a certain iconographic theme, style period, technique, or material.

In the Nordic Countries, studies on the individual objects and collections in churches and dioceses have been published. Although relatively few Nordic reliquaries have been studied in depth, the

[100] Bynum 2011, 280–286.
[101] Geary 1978, 152–157; 183. See also Räsänen 2013d, 108–126.
[102] Kroos 1985, 25–45.

amount of literature with references and comments on the topic is remarkable. Historians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries described relics and reliquaries as sights to visit in their travel accounts or their histories of political or ecclesiastic authorities. In the 19th century, with the development of more systematic research methods in cultural history, the first treatises on reliquaries began to appear. One of the earliest is the nineteenth-century art historian Nicolay Nicolaysen's article on Norwegian reliquaries in 1888.[103] In art historical studies on Nordic churches, reliquaries are mostly mentioned in passing – with some exceptions, such as the long chapters on St Eric's reliquaries in art historian Herman Bengtsson's recent book on Uppsala Cathedral.[104] An essential study is Olle Källström's survey of the church silver confiscated in Sweden during Gustav Vasa's reign, where he discusses the ambiguity of terms in the sixteenth-century confiscation documents, some of which refer to reliquaries.[105]

Typological groups of reliquaries have been analysed in Thor Kielland's and Sigurd Grieg's studies on Norwegian and Danish reliquaries in relation to Denmark's "Golden Altars" (see *Tabula* in Chapter 3 of Part 1), Fritze Lindahl's work on Danish medieval reliquary crosses, and Britt-Marie Andersson's work on Swedish enamel reliquaries.[106] Individual reliquaries studied in great detail are mainly the large shrines of St Canute, St Olaf, St Eric, St Birgitta, St Henrik, and St Hemming; regarding smaller reliquaries, the silk skull from Turku Cathedral has been of particular interest to several researchers, including myself.[107] More recently, lost and extant Nordic reliquaries have been most actively discussed by art historian Lena

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[103] Nicolaysen 1888; Hildebrand 1903, 607–648; Liebgott 1982, 101–132; see also Molland 1982, 54–60; Vellev 1972, 18–27.

[104] Bengtsson 2010, 45–64; 124–148; 248–250; see also Källström 2011, 66–80; 114–120; 179–185; 299–304.

[105] Källström 1939.

[106] Kielland 1927; Grieg 1973; Grinder-Hansen 2003, 159–172; Andersson 1980b; Lindahl 1990, 1–10.

[107] See e.g. Rinne 1932; Thordeman (red.) 1954; Bygdén & Gejvall & Hjortsjö (red.) 1954; Vellev 1986, 123–156; Authén Blom 1994; Edgren – Melanko 1996; Ekroll 2007, 147–207; Nisbeth & Estham 2001; Hirvonen 1997, 101–103; Lahti 2001; Lahti 2002, 19–22; Lahti 2003, 9–10; Arponen 2015, 104–116.

Liepe, whose approach is focusing on the material, sensory, visual, and historical aspects of the objects, and myself (I have used material from my published articles as well as from my master's thesis in the present text, which is indicated in the footnotes). Archaeologist Visa Immonen has studied reliquaries in the context of liturgical vessels, often with the versatile approach of combining material analysis with conceptual or theoretical concerns. An archaeological perspective more intent on dating and technical analysis has been provided in articles by Jussi-Pekka Taavitsainen, Aki Arponen, and Mira Karttila. [108] Nordic researchers have also turned their attention towards the cult of relics elsewhere. Recently, the cultural historian Marika Räsänen has shed new light on the political and religious meanings of the relics of St Thomas Aquinas as well as the sensory experiences related to his cult.[109]

Internationally, the largest general treatise on European reliquaries is still Joseph Braun's classic *Die Reliquiare des Christlichen Kultes und ihre Entwicklung* (1940). Braun typologised and listed all the material he found, both objects and document references. A number of Nordic reliquaries, but far from all, are mentioned in his work. Braun's typology, though otherwise relevant, is one source for the misleading concept of the narrative reliquary, (*redende Reliquiare*), referring to a sculptural reliquary whose shape was supposed to "speak its contents". This was repeated by numerous researchers. Cynthia Hahn, whose work is essential in interpreting both body-part reliquaries and reliquaries with narrative imagery, has also remarked that all different reliquary shapes, from hands and crosses to bursas and church shapes, exist in order to deliver a specific message.[110] In this sense, all reliquaries are "speaking". This is a perspective that I will apply when inspecting the different kinds of Nordic reliquary.

An important recent monograph on reliquaries is Hahn's seminal book *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400*

[108] For a recent dating project of the relics from Turku Cathedral, see e.g. Immonen & Taavitsainen 2011, 141–173; Taavitsainen 2011, 447-450; Taavitsainen 2014, 263–277; Taavitsainen & Oinonen & Possnert 2015, 308–322; Arponen 2015, 104–116; Karttila 2014, 10–25.

[109] Räsänen 2013c; Räsänen 2005, 99–110; Räsänen & Hartmann & Richards (eds.) 2016; Räsänen 2017.

[110] See e.g. Hahn 2012, 29; 67–71.

– *circa 1204* (2012), which brings several new perspectives to understanding different types of reliquaries. Hahn was also active in the revival of reliquary studies in the 1990s, resulting in the 1997 issue of *Gesta* (the journal on medieval art and architecture) being dedicated entirely to body-part reliquaries, with articles by both art historians and historians.[111] In recent decades, several anthologies have been published on the history of relics and their relation to reliquaries and images, exploring how the material and spiritual values of relics and reliquaries became entwined.[112] Reliquaries are also present in several books about the Middle Ages, and in art history on the cult of saints. These are often beautifully illustrated, partly or entirely research-based exhibition catalogues, but also focusing on the theological and aesthetic questions concerning relics and reliquaries.[113] Art historical dissertations and research publications on reliquaries, including ones focusing on body-part reliquaries, increased in the 1990s, and a second revival seems to be underway now.[114]

## 5 – Parts, Chapters, and Sections

This thesis is divided into three main parts, studying (i) the diversity of reliquary shapes, types and terminology; (ii) the particular characteristics of head and arm reliquaries; and (iii) the ways

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[111] For a concise historiography of body-part reliquaries, see Boehm 1997, *passim*.

[112] Bozóky & Helvétius (eds.) 1999; Reudenbach & Toussaint (eds.) 2005; *Sanctorum* 2/2005.

[113] Legner (hrsg.) 1985; Legner (hrsg.) 1989; Gauthier 1986 (1983); van Os 2000; Bagnoli et al. (eds.) 2010; Hahn 2017.

[114] Scott B. Montgomery's *The Use and Perception of Reliquary Busts in the Late Middle Ages* (1996) is an enlightening approach to the topic from the perspective of their 'meaning' and reception. Barbara Boehm's art historical approach in *Medieval Head Reliquaries of the Massif Central* (1990) is more traditional, addressing questions of style and dating. Hand or arm reliquaries are, meanwhile, studied in Martina Junghans's thesis *Die Armreliquiare im Deutschland vom 11. Bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (2002), in which one of the Nordic arm reliquaries is even discussed– the so-called arm of St Olaf. An example of a local perspective, relevant for my dissertation as well, can be found in a more recent PhD (2003), *Pallid Corpses in Golden Coffins: Relics, Reliquaries, and the Art of Relic Cults in the Adriatic Rim*, where Ana Munk looks at body-part reliquaries in the context of their own local "relic-conscious interpretative community" and other ecclesiastic art in the same visual cycle.

reliquaries were treated and perceived. Finally, extant and lost relics appear together in a typological catalogue in the appendix.

Part I presents the types of reliquaries in the Nordic Countries and the terminology used to describe them in medieval documents. The aim here is to illustrate not only the variety of shapes among objects sharing the same function, but also to analyse the ambiguity of terms used in the Middle Ages to refer to different reliquaries. Some examples of each typological group are individually discussed in order to better understand their particularities; including objects which are not primarily considered as reliquaries but have had relics inserted in them – altars, for example, and devotional images such as wooden sculptures. The only reliquaries left out are body-part reliquaries, as these are covered in the second chapter.

Part II, on body-part reliquaries in the Nordic Countries, is the art historical core of the thesis, with an analytic and interpretative focus on each item. The extent of analysis is naturally dependent on the available data, which also determines the perspectives best suited for approaching each lost or extant reliquary. Despite their shared primary purpose – to protect and to promote the relic inside – my intention is to show how reliquaries' other medieval roles differed from each other as much as their physical forms, how these meanings and functions were conditioned and influenced by varying factors – whether visual or material, religious or secular, international or local.

Part III is aimed at mapping the locations, personalities, and practices central to understanding the "social life" of reliquaries in Nordic countries. It is a history of their users, commissioners, makers, repairers, owners, and audiences. The last chapter in this part moves on from the Middle Ages to observe the effects of the Reformation on relics and reliquaries, and finally to their current situation.

The purpose of the catalogue in the appendix is to facilitate the comparison of all notions of reliquaries collected for this project. Though the catalogue table provides an exhaustive list of all known reliquaries – extant and lost – the appendix is not intended to contain all the available data related to each; instead, the descriptions are brief, and the number of details, relics, and written sources listed are restricted. Only reliquaries in the narrow sense of the word are considered in the catalogue; objects with a different primary function – such as altar *sepulchra* and wooden sculptures – are excluded.

However, altarpieces and aumbries explicitly made for relics are included. The reliquaries are grouped according to the same genres as in the dissertation text; some of them have an uncertain classification.

# I
# SHAPES, CONSTRUCTIONS AND APPEARANCES: THE DIVERSITY OF RELIQUARIES IN THE NORTH

While certain reliquary types or shapes are characteristic of certain cultural periods, during a large part of the Nordic Middle Ages all those different types coexisted. All of those reliquary types are discussed in the following chapters, and registered in the appendix catalogue, following the same order as in the text.

The typology employed here loosely follows the development of cults: while relic cult developed towards a more visual expression, relics emerged from under and inside altars to visible places behind or on top of them, though still hidden inside a reliquary. Each relic and reliquary had its specific place on an altar, or in an altarpiece, niche, or cupboard. The larger reliquary shrines usually had a permanent place and were always visible as central elements in the church space, while smaller ones might be displayed only during feast days. The earliest reliquaries were rectangular shrines, perhaps with engraved, embossed, or painted images referring to the saints. The smallest reliquaries were wearable, personal items like pendants. Later in the Middle Ages, reliquaries often took the form of three-dimensional images or transparent containers revealing their contents.[115] All these different reliquary types are fairly equally spread throughout medieval Catholic Europe, but some regional differences can be recognised.

Apart from the reliquary types catalogued in the appendix, two other types of objects related to the cult of relics are discussed in Part I. From the point of view of this thesis, they are not reliquaries and are thus not catalogued, but they are relevant for the understanding of the reliquary phenomenon. The first group of those consists of altars, sepulchra, and their contents described in Chapter 1 immediately

[115] For a comprehensive view of the development of different reliquaries, see e.g. Hahn 2012, *passim*; Braun 1940, *passim*.

below. They form part of the historical background to the development of reliquaries.

Also featured here, but not in the catalogue, are so-called secondary reliquaries. This "secondary sense" of reliquary has been mentioned earlier (in the introduction), but to recap, describes those objects which contained hidden reliquaries but had a primary function that was quite different – such as sculptures and altarpieces. The line between secondary and primary reliquaries is fine and often unclear, but the knowledge of its existence is vital in understanding the different relationships between relics and images.

## 1 – Relics within Altars

Altars in medieval churches are closely associated to the cult of relics since the very beginning of Christianity. Relics were inserted into altars, and large reliquary shrines or tombs could be used as altars. Moreover, most reliquaries were officially associated to a specific altar within the church.

Placing relics inside the altar is a concrete example of continuity in the cult of relics. The relic gives the altar the status of a grave, and consequently the communion served at the altar becomes a repetition of the meals shared by early Christians at graves of martyrs. The gradual transfer from graves to altars happened for practical reasons. When the cult moved from graveyards and catacombs to churches, there was a practice of building altars on the graves of saints, and later building a crypt for relics below the altar. Even in some Nordic churches, graves (possibly of saints) have been found buried under the main altar.[116] When Christianity spread and churches became more numerous, they could not all be erected over saints' graves, as churches were built in areas where no graves existed. A compensatory practice then developed to give altars the same authority as a grave – even a small relic of a martyr saint was considered powerful enough to "seal" the altar and represent the body of a saint. Hence, the niche for relics in the altar is called a grave (in Latin, *sepulchrum*). Indeed, at the second council of Nicaea in 787, the deposition of relics (in altars)

[116] Holmberg 1990, 19; Angenendt 1997, 167–172.

was officially adopted as a necessary practice in the consecration of churches.[117]

Relics were usually enclosed in the main altar when the church was consecrated, together with grains of frankincense. Although consecration and the insertion of relics have been defined as two separate events, it is clear that they were essentially connected.[118] Written documents and preserved medieval altars or *sigillum* stones used for covering relic niches testify to Nordic efforts at following the Nicaean ruling. The inscription on one marble *sigillum* from Mære Church in Norway has been interpreted as literally stating that the church was dedicated to the saints whose relics had been inserted in the altar.[119] Also, in Scania, the ecclesiastic law stated that it was the duty of the consecrating bishop to make sure there were relics to seal the altar with.[120] Eighteen surviving notes of fifteenth-century altar consecrations from Uppsala cathedral state that the relics were not there to simply legitimise the altar for use, but with the help of all other saints, to mediate between the parishioners and Christ.[121]

The written documents also show that altars were not necessarily dedicated to the actual saints whose relics were used in the consecration;[122] so the relic served more as a representative for the whole community of saints – its presence being more important than its identity. Reliquaries, too, were considered interchangeable in the same way. If no relics were available, a new altar or church could be consecrated instead by special permission of the pope, and the relic would be substituted by three blessed hosts enclosed in the altar

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[117] Snoek 1995, 177–185. On the predominance of martyr relics in Nordic altars, see Karlsson 2015b, 133.

[118] Guilielmus Durandus 2007 (c. 1286–1291), 93–106. On the frankincense in Danish and Swedish altar sepulchra, see Karlsson 2015b, 115–117.

[119] An image of the stone in http://digitaltmuseum.no/011013459916?query=relikvie&pos=13 (cited 4.6.2016)

[120] Holmberg 1990, 19.

[121] Dahlbäck 2002b, 41–62; Romdahl 1922, 25–26; Registrum Eccl. Upsaliensis fol. 174; SD II, 648 (1413): "*et hec reliqie deposite sunt in altari, videlicet de Sancto Henrico, de Sancto Erico rege et martire, de Sancto Eustachio et de undecim milibus virginum. Isti sancti cum omnibus sanctis intercedere dignentur pro nobis ad dominum nostrum Ihesum Christum. Amen.*"

[122] Karlsson 2015b, 134.

niche.[123] If the insertion of relics validated the church, removing them had the opposite effect: the twelfth-century *Canones Nidrosienses* rule allowed the bishops of Nidaros to deconsecrate badly maintained churches by specifically removing the relic.[124]

It was common to register all the relics of a church in a list, and some of those lists survive in the Nordic countries. When only relics were listed, without mentioning their containers, this may often (but not always) mean that the list consisted entirely of relics that were not placed in reliquaries, but inside altars. From the point of view of the *virtus*, the knowledge of their quantity and presence of relics within the altars was perhaps even more important than their visibility in reliquaries. Indeed, as the relics inside altars could not be put on display, their presence could only be known through such lists. The lists of the altogether nearly 200 relics placed inside the high altar and five other altars of Lund Cathedral by the year 1146[125] are without comparison in the Nordic area (at least in terms of their length), which demonstrates the wealth and high status of the Cathedral. In the twelfth-century relic list from Gumlösa church in Scania (96 relics), no reliquaries are mentioned,[126] but it is not known whether all the listed relics were inside altars. According to a list from 1344, Uppsala Cathedral had altogether about one hundred different relics; [127] reliquaries are absent from this list, too, but it clearly contains relics placed both inside altars and in reliquaries.

### 1.1 Sepulchrum and Sigillum

Altars in Nordic churches and their relic niches, or *sepulchra*, provide examples of various structural solutions for placing relics in altars. The niche is usually located in the middle of the top surface, set in the North-South direction, but it can also be on the side. The location of the *sepulchrum* as well as the structure of the altar varies regionally. The niche is usually rectangular or cross-shaped, but can also be

[123] Snoek 1995, 186–202; Guilielmus Durandus 2007, 99; Karlsson 2015b, 115–117.
[124] Molland 1982, 50.
[125] Weibull 1923, 90–92; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 53–58.
[126] Hildebrand 1903, 611–613; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 145–146.
[127] SDHK (Svenskt diplomatariums huvudkartotek) 4953.

oval.[128] The *sigillum* stone closing the niche was supposed to be wide enough for the chalice and paten to fit on top of it on the altar. The interior of the space and the *sigillum* are often made of different and more valuable stone than the rest of the altar, for instance marble or, if local materials are used, brick, sandstone, or red limestone. The stones are usually decorated with no more than an engraved cross, but some of them have an inscription about the relics, such as in the Maere example above.[129] There are altars with several niches, too, but not all the niches are for relics; large, open niches on the sides have been used for keeping utensils needed for mass.[130]

In some cases, although rarely, relic niches were also made in church walls. In Swedish Linköping cathedral, a fragment of a limestone *sigillum* was preserved with an inscription stating that relics of the hair of the Virgin Mary (and possibly other relics) had been either donated or inserted in the niche by Henrik, Bishop of Linköping. The beginning and the end of the text are missing; they might have named the altar and other relics, and were written on separate plates. The bishop donated relics to the relic altar in the 13th century; the donation was part of his will, written during his visit to the Holy Land, where he must have acquired many of the relics in question. The *sigillum* apparently covered a relic niche, but not in an altar; it was probably in the wall of the new choir in the East end of the church, where venerating visitors were rewarded with indulgences.[131]

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[128] Karlsson 2015b, 359–464; see also Nicolaysen 1888, 2; Dreijer 1967, 16–17. An example of a different, larger and oval niche is found in Norwegian Vestfold, Borre church. Lárusson 1980, 114–115. In Guldrupe church, Gotland, the inside walls of a relic niche in the front side of the high altar were painted red; see Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 29. Even entirely hollow altar structures were found, for instance in Hammarland church on Åland; see Ringbom & Remmer 1995, 91–92.

[129] See e.g. Dreijer 1967, 16–17; Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 34.

[130] See e.g. St John Hope 1907, 416; Riska 1961, 26; 100; 122; 184; 229–230; Källström 2011, 78–79.

[131] SDHK 1248, *alias reliquias ponendas ad altare reliquiarum*; Fett 1909, 141–144; Romdahl 1922, 23–27; Källström 2011, 114–115. -An unusual wall niche for relics in the exterior side is preserved in Kirkjubøur Cathedral, Faroe Islands; it is covered with a 14th-century stone plate which has the Calvary group carved in relief and an inscription stating the contained relics. For unknown reasons, the item is traditionally called "The Golden Cabinet" (*Gullskápi*ð). See Arge 2018, 39–41.

An apparent relic niche hidden behind a wall painting, without any *sigillum* stone, exists in the church of Kalanti in Finland.[132] Its function may have been similar to the niche in Linköping, and just that a *sigillum* was not considered necessary. Not all relics were placed inside churches for devotional reasons, however; sometimes they were placed up in the church tower to ward off lightning.[133]

In extant medieval altars, the *sepulchrum* is often empty – the relics having been removed during the Reformation or later. Displaced relic packages and *sigilla* have ended up in museums, in some cases without any remaining provenance data. Yet, some relics can still be found in their niches during renovations or archaeological excavations.

Relics in *sepulchra* are usually wrapped in simple, visually plain packages of protective material. This implies that it was their presence that mattered in this case, rather than any aesthetic design, and that they would only be seen by few people during the brief moments of the consecration. Most typically, the relics were packed in lead that had been tightly folded from a cross-shaped sheet into small rectangular or cross-shaped boxes.[134] Relics in the niches are also quite often wrapped or sewn inside small pieces of textile. These textiles are not very resistant, and many preserved textile fragments found in altars or reliquaries are so worn out that it is difficult to determine whether they were contact relics themselves or protective wrappings for other relics.[135] These textiles, often precious kinds such as silk, also shielded the relics from sight and expressed their relic status.

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[132] Hiekkanen 2007, 62; Immonen 2009, 186. These two cases are not the only ones, but the phenomenon itself falls outside the scope of this study.

[133] Jexlev 1976, 30, 33; Liebgott 1982, 109.

[134] Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 30–34; Ringbom & Remmer 1995, 91–92; Immonen 2008, 3–9; Immonen 2009, 187–189; Karlsson 2015b, 110–115, 465–510.

[135] A collection of such small wrapped packages have survived in Turku Cathedral, found in a pouch inside the so-called St Hemming shrine, where they had apparently been stored after the end of the Catholic era. Originally some might have been kept inside altars or statues or visible through crystal in monstrances. All of them have *authentica*, most of which are still legible, but recent studies have shown that they were reattached, and the connections between the names and packages are no longer original. See Rinne 1932, 365–381; Immonen & Taavitsainen 2011, 141–173; Taavitsainen 2014, 263–277; Arponen 2015, 104–116; Taavitsainen & Possnert 2019, 199–200. On Danish and Swedish textile relic packages, see Karlsson 2015b, 135–137. On dating of textile fragments in reliquaries, see also Stauffer 1991.

Clay flask-type reliquaries, reminiscent of the earliest Middle-Eastern reliquaries or pilgrim tokens, have been found in several Norwegian altars.[136] In some cases, relics are packed in decorated boxes or exceptionally elaborate reliquaries such as crucifixes, that may have been used outside the altar before placement inside it.[137] Small, wooden, often cylindrical reliquaries have been found inside Swedish altars, containing a typical lead package with relics and often an *authentica*. These wooden containers have no iconographical references, but they are more refined than the lead packages, being neatly designed and painted or clothed in textile. A late-Gothic cylindrical wooden container with a lid, originally covered with black velvet, was found in Frustuna church in Södermanland, while a round wooden box painted with a blue-green and golden pattern was found in old Ignaberga church in Skåne.[138]

The relics found in altars, just like those in reliquaries, range from sand and wood splinters to pieces of bone, linen, silk, and pearls. Together with the packages, other items are found: incense, coins, resin, pieces of glass. Often the relics have *authentica* with them that note the contents of the package and sometimes when and why they were put there. Apart from *authentica*, reliquaries might have other signs indicating their donor or the consecrator of the altar: in a package of folded lead from an unknown Danish church is the inscription "*aepiskopus gisiko"* (Bishop Gisike of Odense, 1286–1304);[139] while a clay flask in a Norwegian altar niche has the seal of Archbishop Gaute (1475–1510).[140]

### 1.2 Portable Altars

Missionaries and priests or bishops working far from their churches needed a portable altar to celebrate communion. Having such a 'travel altar' was only allowed under papal licence.[141] According to a fourteenth-century document from the Turku diocese, Dominican

[136] Fett 1909, 141–142.
[137] See e.g. Dreijer 1967, 16–17.
[138] Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 29–30; see also SHM 43109; SHM 43493.
[139] Nationalmuseet, Copenhagen, object nr 8326; Horskjær 1969, 60.
[140] Fett 1909, 141–142.
[141] Diplomatarium Danicum 138 is an example of a papal licence for a Danish cleric.

monks could celebrate mass outside churches with their portable altars, and these masses were popular among the locals.[142] In the later Middle Ages, portable altars became private prestige items for wealthy and powerful bishops and rulers. King Karl Knutsson had his own travel altar in the 15th century and mentions it in his will.[143]

Travel altars did not always require relics, but some of them are also known as reliquaries. In some cases, it is uncertain whether an object is a portable altar or just a reliquary casket with a similar shape. What distinguishes a travel altar from most reliquary caskets, however, are the details based on its function. A travel altar needed to be small enough to carry, but on the other hand the *sigillum* stone needed to be large enough to allow room for the communion chalice and paten on top. The stone had to be blessed, but unlike in most solid altars, it could be made of glass or metal. Central and South European portable altars are often made of porphyry – preferably a purple-coloured variant of the stone, referring to the colour of Christ's blood. Others are enamelled in the Limoges style or carved in ivory. When not travelling, portable altars could be kept on top of a normal altar like a reliquary; their images contributed to the iconographic cycle the celebrant could focus on and refer to in his sermon.[144]

Unlike those precious objects, many of the Nordic portable altars that remain are quite modest. They are made of local stone or wood and are usually undecorated, resembling the equally simple *sigillum* stones on permanent Nordic altars (see image 1). Porphyry stones did find their way to the North as well though, as several fragments of it (and other imported stone types) have been found. Those fragments seem to have been used as sigillum stones either in permanent or portable altars.[145] One surviving example of the more decorative portable altars – an enamelled casket with a scene of the crucifixion

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[142] REA 98 (28.5.1340); see also Anttonen 2015, 74.

[143] SDHK 29037; an ivory diptych previously known as "Christian I's travel altar" is in the Danish National Museum, but apparently has no real connection to the king. This is also an example of how the word 'altar' is sometimes used to refer to altarpieces or, as in this case, smaller-scale devotional images.

[144] Hahn 2014, 45–64.

[145] Tesch 2007, 45–68; Karlsson 2015b, 515–528; for a porphyry find in Raisio, South-Western Finland, see Vuorinen 2009, 164, 212 (I am grafeful to prof. Visa Immonen for indicating this source to me).

and a detachable cross on the edge of the lid – is the so-called Frøslev casket found in a swamp of that name in Sønderjylland (see image 2); but the enamel style of this twelfth-century casket indicates it is more likely to have come from Northern Europe than Limoges.[146] Also from Sønderjylland is a thirteenth-century travel altar from Nybøl: the footed casket is illustrated with enamelled images of, among others, Christ and the apostles.[147] In these enameled altars, the *sigillum* stone is substituted by the the removable lid, often featuring Christ in majesty.

It seems to me that certain medieval portable altars have not previously been recognised as such. I suggest a redefinition of one existing artefact and four lost ones described in a document. A locally made thirteenth-century bronze casket from Barlingbo church in Gotland (see image 3) may indeed, according to previous interpretations, not have been an actual travel altar, but I have tentatively included it in this category as it was clearly influenced by the design of travel altars. The casket with animal feet is illustrated with engraved depictions of Christ, the apostles, and five female saints. There is no *sigillum* in the top plate, but there is a hinged opening in the middle of it. The opening lid has an *Agnus Dei* engraving in it depicting blood being collected in a chalice from the lamb's chest, and it is flanked by the four evangelist symbols framed in circles – an arrangement analogous to its counterpart in the lids of Central European travel altars, as Swedish art historian Carl R. af Ugglas has observed without drawing further conclusions.[148]

Four potential portable altars are included in the list of reliquaries in Lund Cathedral: they were not named as altars, but listed among the various *scrinio* or caskets, and yet various details in their description merit a reappraisal. Three of these caskets were kept on

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[146] Danmarks Nationalmuseum, Kbh 1957, 94; Svensson 1980, 182–183; Grinder-Hansen 2002, 39.

[147] Liebgott 1985, 56–57. I have excluded from my discussion another possible travel altar, an enamelled casket with animal feet from Norrala church, as it was donated to the church as late as 1648 and was probably war booty from the Thirty Years War. The object is in Hälsinglands museum and can be seen in http://himlenarhar.se/foremal/relikskrin-fran-norrala-kyrka/ (cited 5.3.2017).

[148] Lundmark 1931, 493; 497–498; af Ugglas 1944, 17–36.

the high altar. Other materials are not mentioned, but the first was covered with a grey, rectangular stone of value – probably the equivalent of a *sigillum*, while a pyx with the host is reported to have been kept on top of the second. The place for containers of the host is obviously the altar, and more specifically the *sigillum*. The third casket on the high altar used to have one or two objects on top of it as well: a copper cross with an ivory figure of the Christ and an alabaster image of the Virgin Mary – though it is unclear whether the Virgin was attached to the cross or standing next to it.[149] Finally, a fourth large silver casket, illustrated with animal images on all sides, also had a stone on top of it, and the relics inserted under the stone are listed separately from the contents of the casket.[150] That stone is probably a *sigillum*, too; in which case not all the relics of the portable altar were in the space under the stone, but also in another space beside or near it.

The custodian's choice to include these items in a list of reliquaries, without terminologically separating them from other caskets, may reflect their double function. When not in use as travel altars, they were primarily reliquaries; the altar function was, so to speak, an extension of their liturgical purpose.

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Altars were the predecessors of reliquaries, but their task was not to display the relics, which were sealed inside to consecrate the altar and to contribute to the mediating power of all the saints present in the church. Portable altars, on the other hand, were designed as flexible liturgical tools: some of them are shaped like reliquary caskets and could also be used as such, as I believe the Barlingbo casket was. In medieval lists of reliquaries, portable altars are not explicitly mentioned as such, but on a closer reading, certain caskets turned out to have the characteristics, including the *sigillum* stone on top of which the communion vessels could be placed. In Nordic churches,

[149] The description of the object(s) on top of the third casket is as follows: *In tercio scrinio quod solet stare ad dextram partem altaris & supra illud crux cuprea cum ymagine eburnea & ymagine beate virginis alabastrina*. Axel-Nilsson 1989, 100–101.
[150] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 92–93.

both permanent and portable altars were generally made with humble materials and simple designs, but more sophisticated examples have been found as well.

## 2 – *Helgonskrin* – Reliquary Shrines and Caskets

"*Skrin*" or "*scrinio*" is one of the most common definitions for reliquaries listed in Nordic medieval inventories and confiscation lists. Some are only known as "*scrinio*" and nothing more, others have details about their material description or saintly attribution. Typically, while most of the Nordic shrines and caskets that have been lost are known from medieval written documents, those that have survived feature only in written documents since the eighteenth century.[151] There have been attempts to find a correspondence between existing shrines and surviving documents particularly in the cases of those dedicated to St Birgitta, St Canute, and Blessed Hemming, but the results are uncertain – those will also be discussed below.

In English, the word "shrine" (as the most direct translation) has a larger range of meanings than *skrin*: it can refer to churches or other devotional buildings or sites, to altarpieces, or to large, sarcophagus-type reliquaries.[152] Here, I will use the word exclusively for the latter – large reliquaries. The meaning of the word *skrin* in Nordic languages is limited to a box or casket of any size, or a body-sized coffin or reliquary. The word *helgonskrin* (saint's shrine or casket), is also used for reliquaries in Nordic sources. In many cases, the exact size and type of these *skrin* is difficult to interpret from the sources. Nicolaysen observed that *skrin* were the most richly adorned reliquaries in his Norwegian examples. He divided them into two groups according to size: full body (over 60 cm) or body parts (60 cm or less).[153] This

[151] Nicolaysen 1888, 4–5.

[152] See e.g. Belting 1994, 443: "Shrines were placed behind the altar, reliquaries on it." For an example of the use of 'shrine' for church buildings, see Hahn 1997b, 1079–1106. For 'shrine' as altarpiece, see e.g. Tångeberg 2009a, 223–240. The Finnish professor of aesthetics Yrjö Hirn saw the shrine function as something churches, host receptacles, reliquaries, and the Virgin Mary ultimately had in common. See Hirn 1909.

[153] "Rigest udstyrede var som oftest de relikviegjemmer, der gik under navn af skrin." Nicolaysen 1888, 3–4.

chapter loosely employs Nicolaysen's typology, keeping in mind that many medieval written sources do not specify the size of reliquaries.

In the context of saint cults, the term *sepulchrum* (not to be confused with the niche in the altar), primarily denotes a grave or tomb which, in the early stages of the cult, contained the saint's body. Miracle collections provide accounts of pilgrims promising to visit the tomb after receiving the saint's help, or accounts of miracles experienced after touching the tomb or staying near it. The miracles were usually written down as a part of the process of official sanctification, and thus descriptions of reliquaries are seldom found in them: they concentrate on the years before the saint's translation, when the body was still in a tomb (not reliquary). In some churches, these tombs or parts of them still exist: for instance, the reliquary shrine of Bishop Nils Hermansson (St Nikolaus of Linköping) may be lost, but a slate with his engraved image from an earlier stone tomb still exists in a wall of the northernmost chapel in the cathedral.[154] The same term *sepulchrum* might later, however, have described the large reliquary to which the saint's body had been transferred. Both tombs and shrines may have been used as side altars.[155] This tradition, even more than using regular altars with their symbolic *sepulchra*, represents a continuation of the paleochristian tradition of conducting services on the graves of martyrs. Worth mentioning in this context are the four examples from the South of Sweden: two large sandstone coffins with depictions of Christ, Mary, and the apostles, in Härad and Botkyrka (Södermanland); and reliefs thought to originate from similar coffins in Lye and Vamlingbo (Gotland). The Härad coffin could have been made for the relics of a local saint such as St Eskil or St Botvid, whereas the Botkyrka coffin has been associated with St Botvid's brother Björn.[156] They might indeed be early tombs related to local cults, but more research is needed to understand their background and meaning.

Another term which is (albeit rarely) used in medieval documents to describe reliquary shrines, is *arca* or *archa*. The reliquary shrine of St

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[154] Fröjmark 1992, 129–130.; Svanberg 1967, 199–216. See also Källström 2011, 198–202.
[155] Rinne 1932, 242–249; Hirvonen 1997, 102.
[156] Bygdén 1954, 328; Boëthius 1975, 16–28.

Hallvard in Oslo is mentioned, for instance, as *archa reliquiarum* in a fourteenth-century will.[157] This was probably a full-body shrine, and has a whole section devoted to it later on in this chapter. In another example, Ribe Cathedral is described as having a small *archa* for unspecified relics, covered with silver sheets.[158] Medieval references to *archa* or *arca* mostly refer to a regular casket or coffin, or to Noah's Ark in the Bible.[159] An allusion to the Ark of the Covenant is also reasonable in the case of reliquaries, being as they are containers of the sacred.[160]

Full-body shrines are the largest, and often most valuable, reliquaries built to accommodate the whole body of a saint. As possessing the body of a saint was considered economically, politically and spiritually fortunate, the shrine containing it had a unique status in the church. They could be made from wood, stone, copper, brass, gold, or silver. Metal-coated shrines often had a wooden inner structure. If the whole exterior layer could not be made of precious metals, a cheaper alternative was to cover it in fabric decorated with silver. A wooden shrine without metal parts could also be beautifully carved and painted. The shape of shrines often alludes to the church: they are rectangular, with a gable roof, but in a simplified form, without apse or transept, so I use the term 'chapel-shaped'.

Most Nordic full-body caskets were made for the bodies of local saints. In exceptional cases, the complete body of a saint could be purchased from abroad, but typically they were transferred from a nearby local church to a cathedral. The purchase of a large shrine was the result of a strong local cult following, or a successful process of canonisation. The earliest caskets were comparatively simple, but by the end of the Catholic era, with sufficient economic resources they were replaced with more sumptuous designs. For the saint's first translation, resources might only allow for a wooden casket, but with some luck, pilgrims would have helped provide for a new casket. In

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[157] DN 2:75.

[158] *Item archa parua pro reliquiis cum laminibus argenteis circumposita*, Ribe Oldemoder, 115.

[159] See e.g. DN 7:129; DN 8:21; SDHK 8197; SDHK 377.

[160] For more on reliquaries and the Ark, see Hahn 2012, 111–112; 149; 238–242.

some churches, this 'adding of value' was interrupted by the Protestant Reformation. Large silver or gilt silver caskets made by skilful silversmiths were colossal investments, and several decades, or very wealthy sponsors, were needed before the necessary amount of silver could be amassed.

Smaller caskets must have certainly been more practical in processions, but larger ones were carried too: some have handles, or holes in which handles or rods for carrying could be inserted – as with the wooden "Shrine of Blessed Hemming" casket from Turku Cathedral (see *The Two Shrines of St Henrik* below). In some cases, a bier was also used; this practice is mentioned in miracle stories of St Olof and St Canute Lavard,[161] for instance. The bier for carrying St David's Shrine and image, for instance, resided in Munktorp church until the eighteenth century, though the shrine itself had already been lost.[162] The only remaining reliquary bier – that could be carried on the shoulders by two men – is from Hedal church in Norway.[163] Larger and heavier full-body shrines needed more men to carry them: according to one post-medieval description, St Olaf's Shrine was carried on a large platform by dozens of men.[164]

### 2.1 Two Shrines in Odense: Saint Canute and his Brother

In the crypt of St Canute's Cathedral in Odense, Denmark, two quite similar full-body reliquaries survive. One of them, known as "*Søjleskrinet*" (the pillared shrine), is commonly associated with King Canute (Knud), and the other, "*Skrålågsskrinet*" (the shrine with a slanted lid), with his brother, Benedict. Dating approximately from the early 12th century, around the time when St Canute was enshrined, they are possibly the two oldest full-body reliquary shrines in the Nordic countries. A twelfth-century chronicle describes the shrine of St Canute, but the details are so few that it neither confirms nor contradicts the shrine's identity.

At some point, possibly just after the Reformation, the two shrines were concealed inside the wall of the church. They were rediscovered

[161] Danske helgeners levned II, 361.
[162] Grau 1754, 284; Lundén 1944, 138.
[163] Fett 1909, 143–144.
[164] Ekroll 2002, 87.

in 1696, but were only properly taken out in 1833. Since then, they have been studied and discussed by several generations of antiquarians and researchers; most recently, they were opened and their contents analysed in 2008. After years of inspection and conservation work, the shrines were reinstalled in the church and are now protected in glass cases.[165]

An early twelfth-century chronicle (thus roughly contemporaneous with St Canute's translation in 1101) describes the shrine commissioned for him by Bishop Hubald of Odense. It recounts that a shrine for his holy bones was made out of golden, shining metal decorated with lovely blue and yellow stones. Wrapped in "gold hued silk", the white bones were transferred from their previous stone sarcophagus in the crypt to this new shrine.[166] Despite the temporal proximity and the hagiographic bias of the twelfth-century author Aelnoth, the description neither contradicts nor confirms the identity of the two Odense shrines. The materials – gold, gems and silk – are typical elements in a reliquary; but the specific colours mentioned could indicate that Aelnoth's description was based on first-hand observations. Aelnoth also writes that St Canute's widow, Queen Adela of Flanders, bestowed the shrine with donations,[167] but does not specify their nature.

The two oak shrines were originally covered by gilt copper plates attached to the surface which might correspond to Aelnoth's reports of "golden, shining metal". There do not seem to be any gems, but they could well have disappeared along with the gilt plates. The fragments of plates that do remain are reminiscent of the aforementioned "Golden Altars" in Danish altar frontals. The fragments form bands with vegetal ornamentation along the edges; while the majority of the plates now lost apparently depicted saints in

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[165] The sources and research concerning the two shrines before the latest intervention are comprehensively presented in Vellev 1986, 123–156. For a more concise version, see Vellev 1982, 3–9.

[166] "Here, metallic ornaments now glitter like gold, decorated with precious, gold-hued silk" (*Hicqve nitent fulvi nunc ornamenta metalli, Cum serico gemmis croceo pretiosa decoris*). See *Vitae Sanctorum Danorum*, 129–134; see also Burman Becker 1886, 30–40; Jørgensen 1899, 256–308.

[167] Gallén 1985, 56; *Danske helgeners levned* I, 101–102.

relief framed by wooden arcades. The *Søjle* shrine associated with St Canute (see image 4) had a cross in the middle of a row of saints; the other shrine had a round shape in the middle of what once was a similar arcaded row.[168] The gilt copper plates were possibly removed and sold in the eighteenth century.[169] No iconography is now left on the shrines. Elsewhere it is common for metal plates to cover large reliquaries: in the wealthier churches of Central and Southern Europe they are silver or gold, while in the North more often gilt copper. Smaller examples, but of a similar style, exist in Nordic museums.

Both Odense shrines have simple, rectangular feet. According to a report from 1833, both also had small metal hooks or loops in each corner so they could be carried in procession. In one of the gables of the *Skrålågsskrinet*, a rectangular opening can be seen. It is too small for removing the large relics, but large enough for reaching a hand into the space and touching them.[170] The *Søjle* shrine has lost its lid, whereas the lid of the *Skrålågsskrinet* seems to be more recent than the rest of the shrine. Archaeologist Jens Vellev has judged the lid to be more Romanesque, with German influences, and argues that – despite their similarity in size, material, shape, and Nordic style – the two shrines were made by different hands; though one of them might have served as a model for the other.[171]

Aelnoth mentioned that the bones in the shrine were wrapped in gold hued silk., and when the shrines were opened, several textiles were found: in one was a red silk cloth with an eagle pattern and a yellow silk pillow with peacock pattern; while in the other there were two yellow pillows without figural patterns. The inside of the *Søjle* shrine had been lined with purple silk, of which only small fragments still remained under copper nails.[172] Recent analyses have revealed that the silks were from Southern Europe and coincided with the enshrinement.[173]

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[168] Burman Becker 1886, iv–viii; Jørgensen 1899, 256–308; Vellev 1986, 123–156.
[169] Vellev 1986, 153.
[170] Vellev 1986, 130–131; 143.
[171] Vellev 1986, 151–152.
[172] Vellev 1986, 144–147.
[173] Hedeager Krag 2010.

Another depiction of a reliquary dedicated to St Canute can be found in a sixteenth-century painted altarpiece from St Peter's Church in Naestved, Denmark. The painting neither corresponds to Aelnoth's description nor to the existing shrines: a long, simple, dark casket with a golden lock, but no gilt plates, lies on an altar on top of a white cloth. It seems smaller than a full-body shrine. The casket is open, revealing the bones inside. Unlike in Aelnoth's chronicle, the bones are bare, not wrapped in silk. A cardinal is taking another bone from an officiating pope. As Liebgott has observed, the pope's presence in the image is symbolic and refers to his consent for the saint's canonisation.[174] The other details were probably also designed to convey the essential in the image: the reliquary had to be depicted as small enough to be placed on an altar, and the bones needed to be bare to be visually distinct. A dark casket would stand out against the white cloth and as a backdrop for the white bones. However, a simple wooden casket was not necessarily just a generic object in the painter's mind; often the first receptacle for Nordic saints' bodies in the early days of their cults was wooden, as we shall see in the case of St Olaf.

### 2.2 The Layered Shrine of Saint Olaf in Nidaros

One of the largest and most visited Nordic reliquaries was the gilt silver shrine of St Olaf in Nidaros Cathedral. According to recent interpretations of early written sources, it had four different shapes during the course of its history. The shrine no longer exists, but several written records and images originating from different centuries survive. Most recently, this fragmentary information has been pieced together and analysed by the art historian Anne Lidén and the historians Grethe Authén Blom and Øystein Ekroll.

The first casket made for the body of the holy king right after his death in 1030 was a simple wooden burial coffin, full-body size, as the body was not yet a bare skeleton. As this first coffin was incorporated into later ones, it also dictated their dimensions.[175] It was soon

[174] Liebgott 1982, 16–17.

[175] Ekroll 2002, 69–71; Ekroll 2007, 167–169. A similar-sized parallel was the 180 cm shrine of St Thorlak in gold, silver, and precious stones, commissioned in Iceland by the Bishop of Skaalholt, Paal Jonsson (1195–1211) from the goldsmith Thorstein. It was an exception among Icelandic caskets that generally did not exceed 60 cm. Nicolaysen 1888, 12–13.

exhumed – or rather, discovered to have miraculously exhumed itself – and was transferred to the altar of St Clement's Church, where it was covered with a precious cloth and canopy.[176] The first translation of St Olaf is depicted in a relief from a damaged altarpiece in Drev church and a painted altar frontal from Nidaros, both made around the year 1300. In the Drev relief, the body of the saint is lifted into a simple casket, which corresponds to the description of his first coffin. In the Nidaros altar frontal, a bishop blesses the saint's body lying in a low casket with gilt edges.[177] Another image from Åhus Church in Sweden shows the soul of St Olaf being led to heaven by two angels from his tomb-like coffin.[178]

Already around the year 1040, the appearance of the shrine had changed. It is no longer described as a wooden coffin, but as a golden shrine. In Ekroll's view, the first casket was embellished with gilt silver or copper plates in the style of the two Odense shrines. It was supposedly commissioned by St Olaf's son, Magnus the Good.[179] It may be assumed that the original casket was now perceived as a relic and thus not substituted even if it had probably not been in perfect condition after the exhumation. I also suggest that the precious canopy and cloth may have undergone a parallel shift of function and meaning. Instead of continuing to cover the wooden casket, they became the shroud wrapping the body inside the casket. When the casket was opened and inspected in the 16th century, a well-preserved, golden-hued, yellow and red silk cloth with floral patterns and two red crosses was found inside.[180]

During the 11th century, the Shrine of St Olaf is reported to have gone through four translations. After the first transfer to St Clement's Church and the casket's renewal with gilt plates, it was then moved to a newly erected St Olaf's Church – also commissioned by Magnus the

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[176] Ekroll 2002, 65; Ekroll 2007, 151; Lidén 1999, 189.

[177] Lidén 1999, 156; 188; 190.

[178] Lidén 1999, 191.

[179] Ekroll 2007, 152–153. Art historian Thor Kielland suggested that this shrine was made in the style of the early Cammin and Bamberg caskets, while however becoming a model for the smaller Norwegian chapel-shaped reliquary caskets. Kielland 1927, 48–55. This is to assume a rather long stylistic bridge between the two genres of reliquaries.

[180] Authén Blom 1994, 7; 29; Ekroll 2002, 69.

Good – then to St Mary's, and finally, in the late 11th century, to the Nidaros Cathedral, that had supposedly been built on top of St Olaf's old burial place.[181] The only existing account of these transfers is found in the Icelandic author Snorre Sturluson's thirteenth-century saga of Magnus the Good.

When Snorre was staying in Nidaros in 1219–1220, he saw a new and different shrine: "King Magnus commissioned a shrine with gold, silver and precious stones. It had the size and shape of a coffin, with an arcade under it and a lid made like a roof, with top edge and gables decorated with heads and a crest; the cover also had hinges and hooks for closing and opening, and it was locked with a key."[182] To picture Snorre's description, it is enough to look at many of the smaller Norwegian and Swedish chapel-shaped reliquary caskets that have been preserved, particularly the St Thomas casket from Filefjell (see *Chapel-Shaped Caskets* below). Except for their size, they correspond well to the description, indicating that the St Olaf reliquary was of the same Norwegian genre – perhaps even its largest, most famous, and first example.[183] The dragon heads in the gables seem to be a decisive characteristic only found in caskets from Norway and Sweden.[184] The Filefjell casket apparently dates from the early 13th century, which is contemporaneous with Snorre's description. According to Ekroll, Snorre's description is accurate, but his knowledge of the commissioner is not. He argues that likely twelfth-century commissioners would have more likely been King Magnus Erlingsson or Archbishop Øystein Erlendsson, who were both committed to the cult of St Olaf.[185]

In the cathedral, the shrine was placed behind the main altar, and an octagonal choir was built round it in the late 12th century to allow better access for pilgrims. English influences from the time of the archbishop

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[181] Ekroll 2002, 73–75; Ekroll 2007, 184–185.

[182] Snorre, Magnus den Godes saga, chapter 10. A slightly different translation is given in Ekroll 2007, 154.

[183] See e.g. Schirmer 1905, 75–77; this same comparison has been made practically by every researcher writing about the St Olaf shrine or the smaller, Norwegian chapel-shaped reliquaries.

[184] Ekroll 2002, 66–67; Ekroll 2007, 156–157.

[185] Ekroll 2007, 154–155.

Øystein's exile in Bury (1180–1183) have been recognised in this choir as well as the *Passio Sancti Olavi*, apparently written by him. In Ekroll's words, the octagon was "the grandest architectural setting of any reliquary in Scandinavia", and as the tallest part of the cathedral, it was a visible mark of the shrine's presence for approaching pilgrims.[186] The arrangement of the shrine behind and above the altar is illustrated by an anecdote in *Hakon Hakonssons saga* describing an attempt to move it. The situation took place when the usurper, Duke Skule Bårdsson declared himself King of Norway in 1239 and wanted St Olaf's Shrine to be present at his coronation. His son entered the cathedral with a group of men to fetch it, but when the clerics would not allow him to take it, the son jumped onto the altar, knocking the shrine with his knees in the process and dislodging it. As Nicolaysen and Ekroll have noted, this proves the reliquary was placed above and behind the altar, possibly so that one of the shrine's sides was in contact with the edge of the altar. The shrine was supported by a structure with pillars or arches, leaving space for pilgrims to lie down or even stand under it, or at least providing openings for them to reach into the space below.[187] Parts of the arched stone structure supporting the shrine have been found in the cathedral. Shallow niches for prayer can be seen along their sides, similar to the structures supporting large English shrines. Ekroll dates this structure to the 14th century[188] – to my knowledge, it is the only example of such in Nordic countries.

At some point, in the fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries, the shrine was given yet another layer of silver. This is described by two sixteenth-century eyewitnesses: in one of the accounts, the new shrine was coated with silver and had "no bottom, but it was placed over two other caskets".[189] In the other account, it is described as a silver shrine inlaid with gold, silver and precious stones with two wooden

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[186] Ekroll 2002, 75–82; Ekroll 2007, 149–150; 178. The most recent study of the shrines and the octagon is in Ekroll's doctoral thesis (Ekroll 2015).

[187] Nicolaysen 1888, 6–7; Ekroll 2002, 80–82; 84–85; Ekroll 2007, 186–187.

[188] Ekroll 2007, 189–192.

[189] Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson, DN 5:586, cited by Ekroll 2002, 83: *"Item Sancte Oluffz skriin som beslaget var med Sylff, ther war inggen botn vdi vden thet var seth vden vdaaffuer .ij anden skrin, oc vdi thet innestæ skrin laag Sancthe Oluffz lekame heel..."*

caskets within, one inside the other.[190] In the early 16th century, the shrine was then further adorned with a large blue stone, probably a sapphire, by Archbishop Erik Valkendorf.[191] Having no bottom made it easier to access to the original shrines and relics themselves during feasts – this can also be found in the sixteenth-century shrine of St Eric in Uppsala (see *The Shrine of St Eric on a Bier* below).[192] The mention of two "wooden" older caskets implies that the large shrine described by Snorre had now been stripped of its valuable metal covering – perhaps to furnish the new one.

Apparently a metal canopy was also installed over the shrine, as in 1429, Archbishop Aslak Bolt ordered materials from Sweden to build or repair a "canopy" (*hufa*), apparently of copper.[193] Canopies were being placed over other reliquaries in Nordic countries at this time, too: one such structure can be seen in St Hemming's Shrine in Turku Cathedral. In fact, there is even a depiction of St Olaf's Shrine with a canopy in the fifteenth-century altarpiece of the St Nicholas' Church in Stralsund, northern Germany (see image 5) – although this may not be based on any actual observation of the shrine in Nidaros. The partly damaged painting shows pilgrims gathered round the open shrine in front of a church. The angular shrine is sheltered under a dark, vaulted, Gothic canopy with trefoil arches. The body in the shrine is loosely covered or wrapped under a patterned brownish cloth.[194]

The painting may well reflect the practice if not the shrine itself, as Grethe Authén Blom has argued: pilgrims streamed in to see the incorrupt body, when the shrine was opened on special occasions like the *festum reliquiarum* on 13 October and the Feast of St Olaf on 29 July. The holy king's successor and half-brother Harald Sigurdsson

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[190] Peder Clausson Friis 1632, cited by Ekroll 2002, 83; 87: "[…] *de ocsaa hafue forbedrit S. Olufs Kiste, oc lagt hannem i et Sølffskrin, dog det var oc to Trækister, uden omkring beslagen met Guld oc Sølff oc besætte met dyrebar Stene.*"; "*S. Oluffs Skrin var indluct i tuende Trækister, den ene uden ofuer den anden, oc den yderste offuertact met Guld oc Sølff* […]"

[191] Lidén 1999, 193.

[192] Ekroll 2007, 162–166; Källström 1954, 411. On the third, Gothic shrine of St Olaf, see also Kielland 1927, 162–174.

[193] *Ok her vt af sende adherder wyrdeligin herra biscop Aslac til Swerikis med herra Vilkin sinom capellan xviij half stycke klædhe at køpa med kopar til kirkionna behof vppa hufuona ofuer sancti Olafs skriin*, Dipl.Norv. no 586; Nicolaysen 1888, 8; Ekroll 2002, 82–84.

[194] For a reproduction of the image, see Lidén 1999, 194.

wanted the shrine to stay closed and threw away the key in 1066, but it continued to be opened for various reasons – one of them being a growing demand for new relics. Authén Blom further suggests that this continued use compelled the guardians of St Olaf's body to replace it with a new corpse, as the visitors expected to see the holy body intact. Ekroll discredits the image as a proof of the arrangement in Nidaros, because the painter probably did not have accurate knowledge of the actual shrine.[195] However, the painter must at least have seen other contemporaneous shrines, but he may have also heard eyewitness accounts of the one in Nidaros. Due to Hansa connections, tradesmen from Nidaros frequently visited Stralsund – and pilgrims from Stralsund may have visited Nidaros. This would correspond to art historian Anne Lidén's argument: she points out that the altarpiece's commissioners, if not the painter, had probably visited the shrine in Nidaros. For Lidén, the openness of the shrine is an allusion to the translation of Olaf's relics to the new metal shrine.[196]

The shrine was carried in and out of the church during the Feasts of St Olaf and on other occasions, such as blessing the fields in springtime, attempts to stop a conflagration, receiving archbishops, and coronations (as we saw from the anecdote above).[197] According to the legend of St Olaf, probably written by Archbishop Øystein in around 1180, a paralysed man was brought to the cathedral during the Feast of St Olaf and was healed after having lain under the shrine, where he fell after getting knocked over by someone. As Nicolaysen points out, the text can be interpreted in two ways – the man fell under the shrine either when it was being carried in procession during festivities, or under the permanent structure built behind the altar.[198] A late-medieval procession is described in one sixteenth-century

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[195] DF 4505; DN 1:1044; Authén Blom 1994, 27–28; Ekroll 2002, 83; Ekroll 2007, 154; 160–161. It was reported in 1517 that St Olaf's blood was kept in a silver reliquary in Stavanger Cathedral (*af sancte Olaff koninges blod i eynom sylffkare*), DN 4:1074.

[196] Lidén 1992, 94–96.

[197] Lidén 1999, 191; exkurs 1:1; Ekroll 2002, 80; Ekroll 2007, 149–150, 159.

[198] "*Eadem hora a loco, ubi positus fuerat, qvasi alicujus impulsu, subtus ipsum scrinium cedidit*". *Passio et mirac. beati Olavi*, ed. Metcalfe 1881, 106; Nicolaysen 1888, 7. - Christian Krötzl reads the story differently, stating that the man was lying on a temporary bed on top of the shrine and then fell into it, entering into physical contact with the relics: Krötzl 2014, 52; 60. This interpretation implies a less usual setting, and I am not sure if the original text provides enough support for it.

eyewitness account: the witness claims that sixty men were needed to carry the shrine, and bags for collecting alms hung on its sides. A *penitentiarius* stood atop the shrine, shouting out indulgences granted by the pope to those who brought offerings.[199] Ekroll comments that the *penitentiarius* would have barely been able to stand on the shrine, but might have if there was a platform carried by those sixty men. According to his calculations, the weight of the three nested shrines and the platform plus cleric would have amounted to as much as 300–400 kg, which would have needed that many men to carry it.[200] How sixty men would have fitted around the shrine is another matter, let alone leaving space for people to approach it and bring their offerings, but the number of men could also have been a reference to its liturgical importance – it *deserved* sixty carriers, or perhaps an escort of sixty clerics? It is more likely though that the description was exaggerated to mock the ostentatiousness of Catholic ceremonies, as the witness goes on to call it "monkey play" that earned the Church a fortune in one day.

When the cathedral suffered a fire in 1531, St Olaf's Shrine and other reliquaries were moved to the episcopal castle in Steinvikholm for safekeeping. In 1537, the archbishop went to exile, taking some lesser relics and church treasures related to St Olaf with him. The castle and its contents were eventually confiscated and the silver brought to Copenhagen to be melted down for reuse. A list of these materials written for King Christian of Denmark, from 1540 or 1542, starts with the silver shrine of St Olaf and mentions fragments that had already been taken from it – at least 170 silver-gilt crystal pearls, a gold pendant detail and the gold-mounted sapphire. In 2002, Ekroll found a crystal pearl with traces of silver in the collections at the Norwegian Cultural History Museum that may been accidentally left behind after the confiscation, which would make it the only surviving element from the famous reliquary.[201] The innermost wooden casket with the holy relics was brought back from Steinvikholm to Nidaros in a procession in 1564. It was very fragile, and a Belgian carpenter in

[199] Peder Clausson Friis 1632, cited by Ekroll 2002, 87; see also Fett 1909, 144.
[200] Ekroll 2002, 87; 90.
[201] Ekroll 2002, 63–94; Ekroll 2007, 195–200.

town was therefore commissioned to make a new one with images of the saint's life on it. The new casket was then placed within stone walls of some kind. In 1568, the saint and his shrine were then buried and have not been found since. The current high altar, made in 1882, was shaped like a shrine in reference to the lost reliquary.[202]

### 2.3 The Elusive Shrine of St Hallvard

Although its medieval existence has been recorded and possibly depicted in a seal, Oslo's first cathedral no longer exists; nor does the reliquary shrine of its patron, St Hallvard. There are no known documents of its destruction, but it is thought to have happened during the Reformation.

The relics of St Hallvard, patron saint of Oslo, are thought to have been enshrined in a large reliquary of gilt silver plates. The shrine was first placed behind the high altar in St Mary's Church, Oslo in 1053, then moved to the high altar of the newly built St Hallvard's Cathedral in 1130, but it did not stay there long. In 1137 – according to the saga of King Inge in the *Heimskringla* – the cathedral was attacked by the troops of King Eric Emune of Denmark, and the Hallvard shrine was moved for safety to Romerike Church outside Oslo for three months.[203] In the saga, one sees the recurring motif of reliquaries refusing to be moved – the first attempt to carry the shrine out of the church failed, they could only move it across the church floor a little way even though there were as many men carrying it as could fit under it. On the next day, however, when the enemy was much nearer, it was possible to take it all the way out of town, and this time four men were enough to carry it.

These written fragments of information can be compared to the depiction of a structure resembling a chapel-shaped, Gothic-style reliquary shrine in a thirteenth-century seal of Oslo Cathedral's chapter (see image 6) – thought to represent the shrine of St

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[202] Lidén 1999, 193; Ekroll 2002, 89–93; Ekroll 2007, 166–167.

[203] *Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ*, 155–158; *Heimskringla*, Inges saga kap. 3–4, http://heimskringla.no/wiki/Inges_saga; Tveito 2006, 9–24. In non-academic texts, the shrine is described as having an additional embellishment – a bronze relief on the lid with a millstone and arrows (his martyrium attributes), although I have not been able to find an original source for this. See e.g. https://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hallvardskatedralen (cited 22.3.2018)

Hallvard.[204] The building on the seal certainly looks like a reliquary shrine: its side depicts a vaulted row of seven clerics, with a bishop in the middle and Christ in a tower above him. One cannot assume that the building represents a reliquary though; it might also stand for the cathedral or the chapter, led by the bishop and, ultimately, God. Seals with depictions of reliquary shrines are, according to art historian Virginia Glenn, "extremely unusual".[205] Structures imitating church architecture exist in several chapter seals, but only in a few cases do they actually seem to represent a chapel-shaped reliquary. Equally illustrative of a similar hierarchy of clergy or saints, is the thirteenth-century seal of the Nidaros Chapter and fourteenth-century seal of the Stavanger Chapter. These both depict a bishop and Christ in a church-like building.[206] In the Nidaros seal, the structure could be referring to the shrine of St Olaf, while no large shrine is known to have existed in Stavanger. The thirteenth-century seal of the Bergen Chapter depicting St Sunniva in a Gothic church could be a reference to the shrine of St Sunniva in Bergen, but Glenn recognises it as a copy of the seal of Inchaffray Abbey (Scotland). Of these seals, however, the only one distinctly reminiscent of a reliquary is St Hallvard's, while Stavanger's "seems to have been a local reinterpretation" of the Oslo seal, according to Glenn – she does not discuss whether there ever was any such shrine in Stavanger that the image might have been based on. Even the Oslo seal is interpreted by Glenn as having the same origin as a seal from Dunkeld in Scotland, which was made by a Belgian or Dutch artisan remembering the shrines back in the Low Countries – possibly the one of St Gertrude in Nivelles. Glenn suggests that both seals were gifts from King Philip IV of France.[207]

The shrine on the Oslo seal is thus not based on any first-hand observation of the reliquary of St Hallvard, but rather on another West European shrine. The seal image was thus chosen as a suitable reference to the existing Hallvard shrine even if it was not directly

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[204] Petersen 1874, 440; Undset 1878, 70–71 (Undset saw the Christ figure as a representation of St Hallvard); Thorkelin 1786, tab. VI; Kielland 1927, fig. 150.
[205] Glenn 2002, 450.
[206] For drawn reproductions of the seals, see Thorkelin 1786, tab. VI.
[207] Glenn 2002, 439–458. For a comparison between the Oslo seal and the shrine of St Gertrude, see Kielland 1927, 169, fig. 150–151.

similar. The chapel-shaped structure might also have been understood as a symbol of an existing hierarchy in the Oslo Chapter, while simultaneously reminding the viewer of the venerated reliquary of the cathedral's patron saint. Although there seems to be no visual reference to St Hallvard other than textually in the seal's round frame, his large shrine was clearly a great treasure and major attraction for the Cathedral. The *archa* of the relics of St Hallvard is mentioned in a fourteenth-century will as receiving money, indicating a living cult that probably enabled the maintenance or renovation of the shrine in the event that the cathedral could not afford a new one.[208] The shrine nevertheless seems to have been melted down into silver coins in 1532, when Christian II of Denmark occupied Oslo.[209]

### 2.4 Two Shrines of Saint Henrik?

Two full-body shrines in the Turku diocese have been associated with the local cult of the bishop and martyr St Henrik. Both are still in their original locations: the stone tomb or copper-plated sarcophagus is in the church at Nousiainen, while the wooden shrine, also known as "St Hemming's coffin" lies in Turku Cathedral. The stone tomb is indisputably related to St Henrik and to its commissioner, Bishop Magnus Tavast, whereas the wooden shrine is still open to dispute. The two shrines continue to attract the curiosity of researchers and locals. They are structurally and stylistically very different, but will be treated together under the theme of St Henrik.

#### The stone sarcophagus in Nousiainen

St Henrik's tomb or sarcophagus in Nousiainen church (see image 7a) is a unique example of its genre: unlike the full-body reliquary shrines made of wood or metal, it is rather like a monumental tomb which means that, unlike the other large shrines, it could not be carried in procession (even by sixty men, as the shrine of St Olaf). It is made of black limestone and covered with engraved copper plates (see image 7b) depicting fifteen scenes from St Henrik's life, death, and posthumous miracles. It is the only remaining Nordic example of a

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[208] *Ad archam reliquiarum sancti Halluardi duos denarios aureos et iij marchas puri*, Dipl.Norv. 2:75.
[209] Gullbekk 2009, 154.

large narrative reliquary. The purchase and decoration of the stone sarcophagus have been attributed to Bishop Johannes Petri of Turku from the late 14th century, but the current fifteenth-century sarcophagus – or at least the engraved brass plates of scenes from St Henrik's life – was commissioned by his successor, Bishop Magnus Tavast.[210] Bishop Magnus seems to have been particularly active in developing the cult of St Henrik and his relics. His investment in Nousiainen shows he wanted to promote the cult there as well, although a large part of the saint's relics had been venerated in Turku already for the whole previous century.

In a vernacular version of the legend of St Henrik, as his impending death approaches, the saint advises his servant to collect his bones (not flesh!) from the snow and to wrap them in silk or expensive woollen baize (*werkahan*), and to sew or tie them up with blue yarn (*sini langoihin*).[211] This demonstrates, not only that relics were usually bones without skin or flesh, but also that relics were often sewn into or wrapped in silk.[212] Neither the legend nor any known documents clearly indicate what happened to the bones after that, but the legend implies that somebody actually collected them and transported them to the nearest suitable place, such as Nousiainen, where the local cult began. Around the year 1300, part of the relics and part of the cult's attention moved to Turku, but Nousiainen was still seen as an important location for the saint's presence. Bishop Magnus Tavast further emphasised Nousiainen's status by commissioning the illustrated sarcophagus. Under the floor below the sarcophagus is a tomb, which is now empty. The sarcophagus is empty as well, but it must have contained a substantial part of the bishop's relics although some of them had been taken to Turku.[213] In the 1450s, which is around the time of the sarcophagus being made, St Henrik's grave or tomb in Nousiainen is repeatedly

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[210] Gallén 1973, 36; Juusten 1988, 56: *His sepulchrum sancti Henrici in Nousis condecoravit*; Palola 1997, 223–224; Lindberg 1998, 62–65. For more on the different forms of St Henrik's material presence, see Lahti 2007, 70–86.

[211] *Piispa Henrikin surmavirsi*, 1999, 7; Haavio 1948, 105–106.

[212] For more on the concept and practices of wrapping relics, see Bagnoli 2014, 100–109.

[213] Lindberg 1998, 63.

mentioned in written documents as the recipient of donations or bequeathals from private persons.[214]

The coat of arms for Turku Cathedral's chapter and Bishop Magnus Tavast are engraved in the margins of the sarcophagus' top plate. In the middle is a large image of St Henrik in a Gothic portal, while Bishop Magnus is portrayed kneeling in prayer before St Henrik, begging the saint to speak in his favour: the word "*commenda*" is written on a scroll-like banderole rising from his mouth. The word is the beginning of a passage from the matins recounted during St Henrik's Feast, and the rest of the passage is engraved on the sides of the same plate as a permanent prayer to the saint. Art historian Tuija Tuhkanen has analysed the intentions and multiple messages of the bishop's donor portrait. She states that the bishop's humble and pious pose was meant as an example, to inspire a similar devotion in others to the cult of St Henrik. It visualises both Magnus's wish to be heard by the saint (or even to enter into a dialogue with him), and to stand with him at the gates of heaven. Finally, it is meant to remind the parishioners to also pray for the soul of Bishop Magnus himself.[215]

The other engraved plates show miracles from St Henrik's legend and people praying for his help in making a pilgrimage to the relics, tomb, or body.[216] The miracles considering the ring and cap (*birretum*) of the bishop are crucial in St Henrik's liturgy, and both of these are also depicted.[217] The ring features twice, in fact, in two slightly different forms.[218] Folklore researcher Martti Haavio, in the 1940s, argued that the legend's references to the cap and ring were intended to legitimise and authenticate existing relics. This is quite likely with

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[214] *sancte henrikx graff j nowsis*, Arwidsson VI 1853, VI: 39; 42. See also Lahti 2007, 77–78; Heikkilä 2016, 237.

[215] Tuhkanen 2003, 240–241.

[216] Heikkilä 2005, 47–156.

[217] *SRS* 1828, 331–343; Haavio 1948, 135–182; Taitto (ed.) 1998, 23; 121; Heikkilä 2005, 160–163; 173–174; 257–259; 410–411. The *topos* of a saint's ring miraculously found appears in other saints' legends, too; the nearest example is the one of the Swedish St Elin of Skövde. Stories of rings worshipped as relics also belong to the tradition of the cult of saints. Among the most famous ones are stories of the rings of Mark the Evangelist and the Virgin Mary.

[218] I am grateful to professor Visa Immonen for pointing that out to me in a seminar years ago.

regard to the ring, as the hypothesis is supported by local folklore and the iconographical prominence of the bishop's ring and severed finger on the cover of the *Missale Aboense* (printed in 1488), and the post-medieval signet image of the Turku Chapter. The *birretum* is also prominent in the visual and textual tradition of St Henrik.[219]

Lena Liepe has analysed reading order and use of space in the plates. As she points out, the medieval hieratic scaling – otherwise little used in the image plates of the sarcophagus – is quite remarkable in one image depicting the miraculous discovery of the bishop's ring: St Henrik's finger is as large as the bird and people in the boat.[220] Apparently, the plates were commissioned in Flanders; the maker was probably provided with the legend text and possibly some specifications concerning the images, but had the freedom to decide on minor details.[221] As Liepe observes, the church depicted in the plates does not resemble the church in Nousiainen, and nor does it need to, because its function is to represent "a church in general".[222]

Nonetheless, the maker could have used his first-hand knowledge in one of the images in which St Henrik's body is placed in a shrine or coffin: the shrine may not be identical to the Nousiainen sarcophagus itself, but there are some essential similarities. The simple shape is covered with illustrated plates, framed in a trifoil and quatrefoil checkered background just like the plates on the Nousiainen sarcophagus, only simplified – in the depiction of the shrine, each plate has only one person on it instead of a scene from the legend. The similarities are thus sufficient to grant the viewer the experience of recognition, and with this visual reference, the image claims a direct connection between sarcophagus and legend. In effect, it is claiming that the shrine before the viewer is the original tomb of St Henrik, which was clearly essential for the cult to carry on in Nousiainen.

According to Nousiainen folklore, St Henrik's presence has been strong: the sarcophagus was reluctant to be moved and always

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[219] Haavio 1948, 176–182; Edgren & Melanko (eds.)1996, 47; Heikkilä 2005, 149–151; Lahti 2007, 74–75; Heikkilä 2016, 233–235. The *birretum* will be discussed further below in the chapter on head reliquaries.

[220] Liepe 2003, 118–140.

[221] Palola 1997, 223–224; Heikkilä 2005, 257–261; Edgren & Melanko 1996, 46–47.

[222] Liepe 2003, 122.

returned to its old place even if someone did manage to move it.[223] Similar stories of saints taking care of their own reliquaries are known from elsewhere in Europe. The story can also be interpreted as a sign of the sarcophagus' importance for the local community right up to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They did manage to move it at least once though: in 1901 its place in the church was changed, but since 1968 it has gone back to its original place in the choir.[224] It is not known what kinds of relics were kept in it, but there is an opening in one of the short sides behind two brass plates acting as doors. According to Juhani Rinne, it originally had a niche with a stone door, but this was replaced when the sarcophagus was covered in brass.[225]

There is no surviving translation account or other contemporaneous source on the translation of St Henrik's relics from Nousiainen to Turku, but later sources (such as the celebration of St Henrik's translation in the liturgical calendar of the Turku Cathedral) indicate that his relics would have been transported to the cathedral around the time of its consecration, in 1300 or the 1290s. The translation of a patron saint – the arrangement and confirmation of his material presence – is a crucial event for the cathedral, and its significance and dating has been actively discussed in archaeology and church history research.[226]

However, it remains unknown how the newly brought relics of the patron saint were housed in Turku. Was there ever a shrine? The remaining documents from the period do not refer to any kind of reliquary or reliquaries. Indeed, the only written references to reliquaries of St Henrik in Turku are from the 16th century, and instead of a shrine, they mention a monstrance and a silver head and arms. As I will argue in the chapters on body-part reliquaries, it seems the cathedral had his skull and arms. The relics of the martyred

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[223] Gallén 1973, 38.

[224] Lindberg 1998, 63; see also Hiekkanen 2003, 193.

[225] Rinne 1932, 245–249. Hiekkanen suggests the opening was even used to crawl inside the reliquary, as was done with larger reliquaries in Europe; Hiekkanen 2007, 125. Even smaller reliquary caskets often have a small door for accessing the relics.

[226] See e.g. Rinne 1932, 56–72; 94–108; 169–180; 231–241; Klockars 1960, 110; Gallén 1973, 33–38; Gallén 1978, 312–324; Hiekkanen 2002, 23–28; Taitto 1998, 13–49. For more on the dissemination of his relics and cult, see Heikkilä 2005, 102–125; Heikkilä 2016, 230–231.

bishop must have certainly been an important source of authority for the young institution, but perhaps the most important part of his body – the skull – might have been enough for that effect.

Even if the body of St Henrik was never in its entirety in Turku, there was an attempt to remove it from there. In 1720, during the Great Nordic War when Finland was occupied by the Russian army, General Governor Gustav Otto Douglas reported to have discovered St Henrik's remains in Turku Cathedral and suggested they should be included in a collection of curiosities for the Russian Czar.[227] In reality, the one hundred bones or more that were there amounted to more than a skeleton, and without reliquaries or *authentica*, they could not be properly identified. The instructions from the Czar were that "the body of St Henrik" be packed for transport and sealed to make sure nobody would try and change them. The package was then stored in the governor's office in Turku Castle to await transportation. Apparently it either went missing in St Petersburg or on the way there, or never left Turku Castle until its disappearance.[228] Either way, some relics were left in the cathedral's sacristy, where they were shown to tourists, as the traveller Daniel Edward Clarke witnessed in 1799–1800.[229] They might be what still remains of the collection today.

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[227] Hipping 1822–1832, 3–12. See also Edgren 1993, 45.

[228] Hipping 1822–1832, 6–12; Rinne 1932, 382–391.

[229] "Even the reliques once venerated here are still preserved in the Sacristy; but they are shewn merely as curiosities to visitants." Clarke 1819, 293. Clarke also notes on the existence of a gilt sculpture of St Henrik: "In a room adjoining the Sacristy are huddled together all the images and symbols of superstitious mummery, which belonged to the Cathedral when it was a place of Roman-Catholic worship; ı[…] Over one of the doors is a gilded wooden image of St Henry the Martyr; which the reforming Iconoclasts have suffered to remain in its original position, as being the effigy of the Patron Saint of Finland, the first preacher of the Gospel in this country. In former times, such was the reverence entertained with respect to this image, that it was only exhibited upon days of public festivity. The old shrine which inclosed it still remains, together with the doors once folded over it." (309–310). Elina Räsänen has commented that Clarke's interpretation of the medieval as well as reformatory attitudes in Turku may have been partly based on his experiences of iconoclasm in England, partly on the explanations possibly given by Porthan and other local academics he met in Turku; see Räsänen 2016, 257–258.

**The double shrine in Turku**

Blessed Hemming, the fourteenth-century bishop in Turku, has been credited for purchasing a casket for St Henrik's relics, too.[230] The purchase would have been a hundred years earlier than the sarcophagus commissioned by Bishop Magnus, but the story does not tell whether it was meant for Turku or Nousiainen. The note is by the nineteenth-century historian H. G. Porthan, whose main source was Paulus Juusten's sixteenth-century chronicle of Finnish bishops. However, Juusten does not mention St Henrik's tomb in relation to Hemming; and neither do any documents from Hemming's time mention the purchase. Historian Tuomas Heikkilä suggests that Hemming commissioned a new reliquary (which no longer exists) in France.[231] Art historian Virpi Hirvonen has even hypothesised that the shrine commissioned by Hemming is identical to an oak shrine that still exists in Turku Cathedral.[232]

The oak shrine in Turku, generally known as "Hemming's coffin" (see image 8), consists in fact of two Gothic, chapel-shaped oak caskets – one a large, full-body-sized shrine with a canopy over it, and the other, a smaller, basilica-shaped casket placed between the larger and the canopy covering it. Stylistically they are quite similar – painted in gold, red, green, and blue, and elaborately decorated with crested roofs, foliage ornaments, and delicate wooden arches imitating Gothic church architecture – but no traces of iconography have been found.

Researchers have discussed the identity of the Turku shrine and casket and whether they originally belonged together, but the answer remains uncertain. Parts of both have been dendrochronologically dated, but the results were not conclusive; all the tested parts originated from different decades of the 15th century. It seems that the larger shrine is slightly younger.[233] With or without the smaller casket,

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[230] "*scrinium Sancti Henrici procurauit*", DF 749; see also Porthan 1859, 244.

[231] Heikkilä 2016, 235–236.

[232] Hirvonen 1997, 101; see also Rinne 1932, 301–310; DF 5715. The shrine has not always been in its current place in the Chapel of St George. In 1929 it was placed in a chapel on the East side of the nave upon its return from Turku Castle Chapel, where it had been taken in 1893. Rinne argues that its original place in the Cathedral was near the main altar.

[233] Hirvonen 1997, 103; Lindberg 1998, 60.

it is one of the few remaining Nordic examples of a medieval full-body reliquary shrine, along with the two wooden caskets of St Canute and his brother in Odense and the one of St Birgitta in Vadstena. Art historian Artur Bygdén has suggested that the Turku shrine was a "provincial imitation", without the silver and gems, of the earlier fifteenth-century shrine of St Eric in Uppsala, which again had been influenced by older Nordic shrines such as the one of St Canute.[234] As styles and details must have travelled through influence and imitation, looking at existing shrines for traces of lost shrines is a beguiling, yet precarious path; it can be assumed that they at least shared some characteristics, having been made during the same period. Similar shapes and leaf ornaments are depicted, for instance, in the fifteenth-century wall painting of the shrine of St Birgitta in Tensta and the drawing of the casket of St Karlung in Karlskyrka, which was possibly made in the early fifteenth century as well.

If Hirvonen's theory that Hemming commissioned the shrine for St Henrik's relics is true, the artefact must have been heavily repaired and renovated to the extent that the parts from Hemming's time have been since lost. Hirvonen also suggests an alternative, more chronologically realistic hypothesis, that Magnus Tavast commissioned or repaired the shrine to hold St Henrik's relics.[235]

The common designation of the shrine as "Hemming's coffin" is based on Bishop *electus* Hemming Gadh's detailed plan for St Hemming's translation feast in 1514.[236] A connection between the written plan and the shrine seems likely, at least more likely than the hypothesis regarding St Henrik, considering there is no description of a "St Henrik's Shrine" in Turku or any documents connecting St

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[234] Thordeman – Källström – Rydbeck 1951, 12–13.

[235] Hirvonen 1997, 103; Immonen 2009, 186.

[236] Hemming died in 1367, and the preparation for his canonisation process began in 1416, when the first miracles related to him were written down. The process was slow, but his tomb was already locally worshipped like a grave altar (Rinne 1948, 1 / DF 4829, 4894, 3632). In 1495, bishop Magnus Stjärnkors of Turku asked his Swedish colleagues to contribute to the collection of miracles so that Hemming's canonisation or at least translation could proceed, *pro eius canonizacione vel ad minus corporis translacione* (DF 4619; Arwidsson I, 1853, nr 86). Eventually the translation was granted by papal letter on 16.7.1497 and 16.3.1499 (Riksarkivet, SDHK 33507) (Palola 1997, 248; Juusten 1988, 56), finally taking place in 1514.

Henrik to the shrine that is there. However, Gadh's plan does not really correlate with the existing shrine either; in fact the only thing his planned shrine and the existing one had in common was the shape and the painted surface. Gadh's idea was to have a rectangular casket painted with gold, with the saint's coat of arms on all sides rather than a visual hagiography.[237] This style is more typical of a bishop's tomb than a reliquary – in this case, the shrine would have been both.

Access to the contents of the smaller casket was through two small doors on one of the longer sides. In arranged photographs from the 1930s, one door is open, revealing an embroidered silk reliquary (discussed as a body-part reliquary later on). The same kind of visualisation also appeared in a magazine illustration in 1870 – a drawing with two formless lumps visible in the opening.[238] The images refer to the fact that those silk-clad relics remained inside the shrine until the 1920s, when the caskets and their contents were inspected by the archaeologist Juhani Rinne and anatomist Dr. Yrjö Kajava. The latter concluded that most of the unidentified bone fragments belonged to a strongly built elderly man, possibly Hemming. The rest were relics covered in cloth: two silk sructures with skull parts, and a pouch containing tiny relic-bundles of local and foreign saints.[239] The small relics may have been placed inside the casket after losing their original reliquary after the Reformation, or they may have been kept together in the casket already in the Middle Ages; as indicated both by preserved reliquaries and reliquary lists, one reliquary could easily contain various relics of different sizes and origins. Rinne has argued that the relics found inside the smaller casket belonged to St Henrik. Based on this and on dating results available in the late 1990s, art historian Bo Ossian Lindberg has

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[237] *Item am i hawe ecke skrin ath legge strax the hälgedoma in, tha tager en fyrakantha kystho, eller afflang, och lather henne forgylla meth malara gwll, och helge biscop Hemmingx wappn oppa alle sider.* DF 5715; see also DF 5714. Hemming's coat of arms is not known, but his official episcopal seal had the image of a hand making a blessing sign with two fingers, and this might also have been in the coat of arms, too. See Lahti 2014, 292–293.

[238] Meinander 1906, 66–72; Hirvonen 1997, 102–103. The drawing of only the smaller casket was made by C. Jansson and published in *Ny illustrerad Tidning* 1870, 141.

[239] Rinne 1932, 301–310. The identity of those small relics has been questioned in recent research; see e.g. Immonen & Taavitsainen 2011, 141–173; Taavitsainen 2014, 263–277.

suggested that the smaller casket was actually made for those relics; while the larger casket could not be accounted for.[240]

The smaller casket was carried in processions; the structure of the bottom is clearly designed to allow two rods to be inserted for that purpose. The casket can be removed by taking the canopy off the larger casket. This practical detail, together with their matching sizes, supports the hypothesis that the smaller casket was kept on top of it already in the medieval period. In the early 20th century, historian K.K. Meinander interpreted the larger shrine to be a stand for the smaller casket which was the actual reliquary. As Rinne has observed, a similar arrangement can be seen in the shrine of St Sebaldus in Nuremberg. Hirvonen also suggests that the large shrine may have contained the body of a saint and functioned as one of the side altars in the cathedral independently of whose relics it contained.[241]

Yet another possible interpretation remains: if the Turku shrine wasn't a shrine, it might have had a different function as an Easter Sepulchre. Wooden, sarcophagus-like examples of this genre can be strikingly reminiscent of reliquary shrines, and a sculpture of the dead Christ is also preserved in Turku Cathedral.[242] More research is needed in order to exclude or confirm this option.

The available sources do not constitute a conclusive evidence on the identity of the Turku shrine and casket. However, it is relevant to note that the scarce evidence supports the connection between them and St Hemming. Not more that two bodies of saints are known to have existed in Turku, and only one written document referring to a reliquary shrine in Turku exists – and the shrine described in the document is wooden and painted, and meant for the cult of St Hemming.

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[240] Lindberg 1998, 60.

[241] Meinander 1906, 66–72; Rinne 1932, 310; Hirvonen 1997, 102.

[242] Examples of these exist at least in the Wienhausen convent in Germany and in Cowthorpe church in Yorkshire, the latter of which is stylistically rather similar to the Turku shrine. I am grateful to Elina Räsänen for bringing this to my attention. Unfortunately I did not have time to pursue this line of thought further, and I do not know if, for instance, the dimensions of the dead Christ would correspond to the sarcophagus structure.

Based on their stylistic, structural and proportional compatibility described above, and despite their slight age difference, I argue that the shrine and casket were intended to be used together. Medieval documents concerning the commissioning and refurbishing of reliquary shrines indicate that it sometimes took the makers years to finish their commissions, and thus the age difference of the two objects might be explained by the fact that they were not produced simultaneously, but successively. Another possibility is that one was commissioned to complement the other, when the development of the cult created the need and the economical means for a larger shrine. Another medieval practice, discussed in the following chapter on the Vadstena shrines, was that a reliquary made for one saint could be repurposed for another; thus worth taking into account is the possibility that the objects were originally purchased for the relics of St Henrik and later adapted for the purpose of Hemming's translation.

### 2.5 Birgittine Shrines in Vadstena

Within roughly two centuries, the earthly remains of St Birgitta of Vadstena were placed in four different caskets. Only two of them have survived, but the other two can be partly reconstructed. St Birgitta had some committed and wealthy followers, and the Birgittine order and Vadstena Abbey grew to become successful institutions. This made it easier to raise the funds to construct shrines and reliquaries worthy of her fame. However, the use of such valuable materials was precisely why two caskets did not survive.

The first casket for the body of St Birgitta, after her death in 1373, was a marble coffin that can still be found in the Roman church of St Lorenzo in Panisperna. From there, the bones of St Birgitta (that had miraculously cleaned themselves overnight) were transported to Sweden in a simple wooden casket in 1374. This can still be found in Vadstena Abbey. A new shrine covered in red silk and silver details was made in Vadstena. A third shrine, made in 1412, was of gilt silver, and after it was confiscated, a fourth one was made, only to get destroyed at the end of the 16th century.

In Vadstena, at least two translations of Birgitta's relics were celebrated. The first one took place after the pope's authorisation in

1381, and the second in 1393 after her canonisation.[243] The type of shrine, tomb or casket involved is not mentioned in any of the available sources, but the second of these celebrations is described in the *Diarium Vadstenense*. In the presence of five bishops, all the parts of Birgitta's body were taken out of the previous casket. The shrine was carried by four bishops in a procession, followed by monks carrying other relics in different reliquaries, and then brought to its permanent place by the high altar in the abbey church.[244]

The reliquaries are not described in the *Diarium Vadstenense*'s account of the festivities, but the full-body reliquary made for St Birgitta in Vadstena still exists (see image 9): it is a simple wooden casket with a gabled roof, probably locally made. It is covered with purple velvet and adorned with silver ornaments, many of which represent the coats of arms of people and families connected to Birgitta and involved in financially supporting her canonisation and the building of the abbey; apparently even two plates with a St Olaf image were formerly included.[245] However, already in 1412 it apparently was replaced by a new shrine and was vacant until being reemployed as the shrine of St Katarina in 1489. Before this replacement, the inside of the shrine was lined with red satin and ornaments, which were sewn together from rather irregular pieces.[246] The recycling of a reliquary may have been a financially motivated action, but in the present case, such practice was probably at least supported by an idea of a family continuity. Also, an iconographical modification of the reliquary was not necessary, as the sarcophagus was not illustrated with images of St Birgitta's life.

Quite soon after the translation of St Birgitta in 1393, it was considered both possible and necessary in Vadstena to commission a new silver sarcophagus for her relics. The construction process took from at least 1408 to 1412. Its weight was about 90 kg.[247] Andreas Lindblom suggests that it was built by Master Lambrecht, who also

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[243] For a comprehensive view on the diverging sources and researchers' arguments on these events, see Jönsson 1987, 37–53.
[244] Lindblom 1963, 9–21; DV 77.
[245] Lindblom 1963, 39–93; Andersson 1983, 95–99.
[246] Lindblom 1963, 64–65; Andersson 1983, 97.
[247] Lindblom 1963, 20; *Den stora kyrkofesten* 2004, 49.

made one of the shrines of St Eric.[248] Although Katarina of Vadstena died in 1381 and was not responsible for commissioning it, her mother's reliquary is described in her miracle collection by one witness as a large silver shrine, with a gilt exterior surface, decorated with precious stones and sculptural details.[249] St Birgitta's relics, including the shrine, were also carried in the procession during the translation of Blessed Katarina.[250]

A wall painting from 1437 by Johannes Rosenrod in Tensta church (Uppland) shows St Birgitta's Shrine carried in a procession; it is a greyish or silvery chapel-shaped full-body casket with a leaf-like shape adorning the edge of the front gable (see image 10). Four men are carrying the casket, led by one cleric and followed by two others carrying open books and a group of five nuns. Could this be the new silver shrine finished in 1412? Although it is not known if the painter had seen the shrine, he may have, considering that he made the wall painting only two decades after it was finished. The leaf ornament is characteristic of Rosenrod's style, but also of fifteenth-century shrines such as the Hemming shrine in Turku. However, the commissioner of the paintings must have known the actual shrine of St Birgitta very well. The paintings were commissioned by the nobleman Bengt Jönsson Oxenstierna, who – like the majority of Swedish nobility at the time – was a devoted follower of St Birgitta.[251] He, at least, had surely visited her shrine in Vadstena and could thus describe it to the painter, which adds to the credibility of the painting.

Art historian Åke Nisbeth, who has analysed the Tensta paintings from a historical perspective, states that the medieval painter may have based his images on prints or drawings or the "image bank" of his own memory. He does not comment on this possible reference to a contemporaneous shrine, but suggests that the painting depicts either the arrival of Birgitta's relics in Vadstena after the journey from Rome

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[248] Lindblom 1963, 20.

[249] "*dixit se hoc tantum scire, quia reliquie et corpus matris sue sunt recondite, repositi et reseruati in quodam magno scrinio argenteo exterius deaurato, sculpto et preciosis lapidibus polito et ornato.*" Processus, 58.

[250] Lindblom 1963, 19-20; SRS III:2, 271; 273.

[251] Ferm 2004, 162–176.

or the translation feast after her canonisation in 1391.[252] Either of those two events would indeed make a suitable last image for the series of paintings representing St Birgitta's *vita*, and they would imply two different shrines. As stated above, the first casket or coffin was supposedly simple and undecorated, and the shrine made for the canonisation was only decorated with silver details attached to the silk surface. However, it would not be contradictory to the narrative standards of medieval painting to depict the currently existing shrine – or a generic shrine – instead of the historically correct earlier one.

Like her mother, Katarina of Vadstena was considered a saint already by the time she died. Even earlier, when she was ill – according to her *vita* – she was lying on a simple straw bed that miraculously appeared to a visitor as covered with adornments and a purple and gold blanket.[253] This sounds like a vision of her future shrine, or the embroidered red velvet cover commissioned to embellish her first tomb. This cover was embroidered with an image of Katarina and a prayer addressed to her, with the coats of arms of its noble commissioners embroidered in each corner.[254]

It is uncertain where she was buried in the first decades after her death, but a stone tomb was probably built for her in the abbey church soon after it was finished in the 1430s.[255] In the miracle collection, the tomb is described while still under construction as having a "marvellous grandeur" by the monk Andreas Cristmanni – its size certainly seemed to be further proof of Katarina's sanctity and fame.[256]

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[252] Nisbeth 2004, 257–258; 245–246.

[253] *videbatur sibi lectus eius optimis paramentis stratus, desuper habens aureum et coccineum operimentum*, SRS III:2, 255. Historian Marko Lamberg comments that this was meant as a sign of the purity of her body, which functioned as a channel between this world and the heavenly realm; Lamberg 2009, 98–99.

[254] According to Anne Maria Franzén, the author of this artwork was Albertus Pictor in the 1470s. The edges of the cloth with part of the embroidered text and the coats of arms still exist, but the middle part, probably with an image of Blessed Katarina, is lost; see Franzén 1963, 191–212.

[255] Fröjdmark 1992, 146–148.

[256] "[…]*vidit in eodem opidio in monasterio Vastenensi lapides erectos et eleuatos pro sepultura beate Katerine ad partem australem ipsius monasterij, super quorum lapidum eleuacione et magnitudine multum tunc temporis mirabatur.*" Processus, 73. The miracles were collected in the 1470s, nearly a century after her death and over a decade before her translatio in 1489. See also Fröjmark 1992, 148.

The monk describes large stones that had been "erected and elevated for her burial". This could mean either a high tomb, or an elevated base for the shrine or tomb, similar to the one seen under the shrine of St Olaf that would allow pilgrims to enter the space under the shrine. On the other hand, there is a description later in the text that there is "little" elevation of the shrine above the floor. Andreas Cristmanni observed that the tomb was in the eastern part of the church, whereas the other note locates it under the choir screen.[257] Miracles were also ascribed to the tomb: in one, a man cured his hand by touching it, whereupon it was lit up by supernatural light.[258]

The translation of Katarina's relics in 1489 is described in the *Diarium Vadstenense*: after being taken from the tomb, some of her relics were first placed in a simple casket which was then placed in a bigger and more worthy shrine, decorated with silk, silver, gold, and precious stones – this must describe the old shrine of St Birgitta.[259] The author of another eyewitness report, Nils Ragnvaldsson describes it somewhat more simply – an empty shrine suitable for her honour and her relics.[260] The inner reliquary casket of St Katarina, within the larger one, was made with red silk as well. According to Ragvaldsson, it was small, very beautifully coloured and lined with red silk and purple cloth.[261] The Vadstena diary hints that this might have been a compromise, as when there were not enough of the most precious reliquaries, simple red-painted wooden caskets were used.[262] It might be that beauty was in the intentions of the describer, if not in the eye of the beholder; as it seems Ragvaldsson was more impressed by the smaller casket, while the author of *Diarium Vadstenense* preferred the bigger. In any case, money was scarce at the time of Katarina's translation, it seems. There were two attempts to have a silver casket made for her remains, but both failed. New silver had been collected

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[257] Fröjdmark 1992, 147–148; *Processus*, 9.

[258] *Processus*, 100.

[259] "*in mayus et solemnius scrinium serico, argento et auro gemmisque fibrefactum finaliter collocavit*", DV 272; Lindblom 1963, 23.

[260] "*ith skrin framburit tompt huilkit æmpnat var förr til Sanctae Katharinae heeder och henna helgedomom*", Den stora kyrkofesten, 48–49.

[261] "*een lijten kysta mycket prydheliga ferghat och innan till bedragen eller fodrat medh roedt sather och lagh i the kistona ith roedt purpura klædha*", Den stora kyrkofesten, 48–49.

[262] "*primo in quodam scrinium ligneum simpliciter rubricatum*", DV 884:15.

for it, and the goldsmith Johannes Menss started work in September 1513; in 1517, indulgences were promised to those who would contribute money to finish the work; finally in 1524, the silver had been transformed into five plates – perhaps the four sides and the lid of the casket – but these were then promptly confiscated on the king's orders – the king refers to them as "the silver meant for the shrine of St Katarina".[263] Only the old velvet shrine survived.

Vadstena became the home for yet another female saint's shrine during the decades immediately following the Reformation, when the shrine of Ingrid Elovsdotter of Skänninge was moved there. Ingrid was a distant relative of both Birgitta and Katarina, and her relics were the treasure of the Dominican Skänninge Convent, which she had founded in the 13th century. The size and shape of Ingrid's reliquary are not known, but it dates from 1507, the year of her translation. The translation festivities are mentioned in a chronicle from this time called *Sturekrönika*, which recounts that her bones were placed in a reliquary and carried in a procession, but there is no further description of the reliquary.[264] In 1544, Ingrid's Shrine was transferred to Vadstena, when Skänninge Convent was abolished.[265] Elements of the shrine's material composition are revealed only in a document from 1595, when the shrine was visited by confiscators in Vadstena and part of it is described in the inventory: "broken silver from a casket that sat on top of the casket of St Ingrid".[266] Again, there

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[263] Källström 1939, 279–280; Lindblom 1963, 24; Andersson 1983, 94; 101.

[264] Lundén 1983, 362; *Sturekrönika* 194–195: "*Stor helligheet i myna daga skedde / som gud besynnerlig i skeninge betedhe / Om sancta Ingrid gudz wtwalde wen / i scrin lagdess hennes helliga ben /Mz flere herrer iag ther war / och hennes skrin oc ben om kyrkegårdhen bar / Allan then almoge som tith drog / math och öll fynge the nog / Högtideligit gästebwd giordes thå / alle bispar och herrar motte titt gå / Frughar oc iomffrur mwnker oc presthe / qvinnor oc män the yppaste oc bäste / Ther opsattes stwffwor saler oc bodher / math gaffs nok både myken oc godher / Jnne oc wthe gaffs i thz syn / ey all enast ööll wthen miodh oc win / Hwar åth oc drak som han gath / god drygd war bade i öll oc math / J wisterhwss oc källare fandz ther oppa rön / tolkit skedde wthen twill för sancte ingredis bön / The herra oc bärgsmän i the stwnde / begåffuade clostrett thz bästa the kwnde / Mz peninga och gull oc sölfftacker store / och sedhen ther epther aff skeninge fore / Twsande fämhwndrade oc [siw] aår / daghen nästh epther olaui thz war //*

[265] Andersson 1983, 94.

[266] Silfverstolpe 1895, 153: "*Brutit sölffuer wti ett skrinn, som hafuer waritt på Sancte Ingeridz skrinn*" . See also Lindblom 1963, 21.

are at least two possible interpretations: either the silver comes from a smaller silver casket that was on the lid of the larger shrine of Ingrid, or – more likely – the original wooden shrine had been inserted into a new, larger one of silver that had been made thanks to the donations of visiting pilgrims. The expression may also refer to a bottomless exterior shrine like the one for St Olaf in Nidaros.

The gilt shrine of St Birgitta was confiscated by the King Johan III of Sweden in 1573. Her relics, together with the other relics from the abbey, were probably housed in the old wooden casket for the transport of her body from Rome. But then in 1580, less than a decade after the confiscation, he commissioned a new silver shrine for her from the Stockholm-based silversmith Hans Theuson. This time there was less silver to spend: the shrine was considerably lighter, 34 kg, and thus probably smaller than the previous one. In late 1595, according to the eighteenth-century chronicler Jonas Werwing, the shrines of Saints Birgitta, Katarina and Ingrid lay untouched. However, it seems the relics were temporarily buried in order to prevent their continued veneration.[267] The inventory of 1595 states that whereas Katarina's Shrine was "covered" with gilt silver, St Birgitta's was "made" of gilt silver.[268] In 1596, the shrines finally disappeared from the church after Archbishop Abraham Angermannus ruthlessly rooted out the remaining Catholic shrines in Sweden, but they were not confiscated – all three shrines were taken to Poland by John III's son and successor King Sigismund in 1598.[269] Only the velvet shrine survived this exile though, probably due to the lack of sumptuous materials, returning to Sweden in 1657 with its identity somehow forgotten. In 1772, the shrine nevertheless ended up in Vadstena again, and was considered a suitable reliquary for the collection of relic bones that had no other protection at that time in Vadstena. In 1918, art historian Andreas Lindblom identified the container as St Birgitta and St Katarina's old reliquary.[270] It now contains a selection of bones – some added upon its return to Vadstena, others that were

[267] Werwing 1746, 292; 444.
[268] Silfverstolpe 1895, 153: *Sancte Britas skrinn af sölfwer förgyltt; Sancte Catarinas skrinn med förgyltt sölfwer öfuerbeslaget*. See also Andersson 1983, 95; 101.
[269] Werwing 1746, 290–294; 431; Lindblom 1963, 24.
[270] Lindblom 1963, 25–38.

in it already before Poland – that have been inspected several times with varying results. Only one bone had an *authentica*, attributing it to St Sigfrid. The two skulls in the shrine are venerated as the relics of St Birgitta and St Katarina, although recent analysis does not confirm their identity.[271] Since 1936, the shrine has been protected under glass in the church of the abbey.[272]

### 2.6 The Shrine of St Eric on a Bier

Another significant royal shrine in the region is St Eric's in Uppsala Cathedral. As with St Olaf and St Birgitta, the shrine of St Eric was renovated at least twice – and transferred from one church to another – during the active period of his cult. The shrine that currently exists in the Uppsala Cathedral was made soon after the Reformation by goldsmith Hans Rosenfelt in Stockholm on the commission of King Johan III, who wanted to replace the previous one that had been confiscated. Before that, St Eric's body could have been in as many as three different shrines, starting from a simple Romanesque casket of wood with gilt details made in the latter half of the 13th century.[273] This succession of shrines has been discussed by several art historians, most recently (2010) in a review by art historian Herman Bengtsson.

After being martyred in the late 12th century, St Eric was buried in the old Uppsala Cathedral; a first translation may have taken place soon after, but he was definitely translated to a shrine in 1257 or 1273. In trying to find clues as to the hypothetical twelfth-century shrine's appearance in the existing Nordic church, historian Artur Bygdén arrives at the hypothesis that the early shrine of the national patron saint was used as a model for other shrines in the area. He presents the stone tomb in Härad, the old silk-covered shrine of St Birgitta and the lost shrine of St Karlung, only known from a drawing, as possible aesthetic heirs. The design of the St Eric shrine itself, on the other

[271] Bygden-Gejvall-Hjortsjö 1954, 9–31; Fröjmark 1992, 72–73; Nilsson & Possnert & Edlund & Budowle & Kjellström & Allen 2010.
[272] Lindblom 1963, 32.
[273] Andersson 1982, 94–96; Bygdén 1954, 321–396; Bengtsson 2010, 133–140. See also ATA, Topografiska registret: Uppsala domyrka 1944–1949; 1950–1955.

hand, may have been inspired by the shrines of the other Nordic rulers, St Canute and St Olaf.[274]

The thirteenth-century shrine is not properly described in any remaining sources, but hints as to its size and constituent materials have been found in medieval documents. It is mentioned in miracle accounts as healing people while being carried in a procession, and as receiving the visits of grateful pilgrims. In 1293, a man healed in front of the shrine donated a valuable baldachin (*pretiosum baldekinum*) to St Eric. The baldachin is mentioned in two other miracles, too. It could have been a canopy erected above the shrine, as in the case of St Olaf's Shrine, but Swedish historians have unanimously identified it as being the brocade cloth spread over the shrine, which still exists in the Cathedral museum.[275] In 1359, archbishop Petrus Thyrgilsson ordered the shrine to be repaired, when it seemed too fragile to survive the next procession. The repairs were made by a carpenter and a goldsmith – this detail confirms that the shrine had both wooden and golden or gilt metal parts.[276] As for its size, a fourteenth-century poem refers to the shrine as narrow, and Bygdén argued that it ought to have been smaller than full-body size, since the skeleton of the king was not preserved intact. This is known from a report by Archbishop Nils of Uppsala from 1303: the old shrine was opened and inspected, and the king's skeleton was found packed into six separate bundles.[277]

Bengtsson argues that a new silver shrine was made in the late 14th century; funds had been collected for it already since the 1350s, and a new translation seems to have been arranged before the year 1401. In his view, this coincided with the making of separate reliquaries for St Eric's head and arm, implied in two documents from the same period.[278] These reliquaries will be discussed further below in the chapters on body-part reliquaries, but for now we can note that some

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[274] Bygdén 1954, 321–331.

[275] Lundén 1945, 52–53; 57; 60; Geijer 1954, 290; Estham 2010, 249.

[276] Bygdén 1954, 323–324; Bengtsson 2010, 136.

[277] Bygdén 1954, 322; Bengtsson 2010, 135–136; SDHK 2021. –In a relief from 1892 on a stone column in the Uppsala cathedral, the translation of St Erik is depicted: a monk and a bishop are together carrying a small, chapel-shaped casket with a ridge turret, resembling the reliquary casket from Eke church – or a miniature version of the existing shrine of St Erik in Uppsala.

[278] Bengtsson 2010, 136–137.

of the silver funds were probably used for them as well, and they might have started being used in the same translation feast. This shrine did not last long, however, as a new one was already being introduced in 1414.

No translation seems to have been arranged for the next shrine, made between the years 1405 and 1414 by the goldsmith Master Lambrecht in Stockholm and apparently funded by Queen Margaret of the Kalmar Union.[279] Its appearance has also been a topic of speculation, mainly due to an ambiguous visual source. A painted altarpiece in Uppsala Cathedral from the same time (though now destroyed) depicted a large Gothic shrine, but the painting's relation to the actual shrine is unclear; the painting itself is now only known from a seventeenth-century drawing by the historian Johan Peringskiöld (see image 11). It has been suggested that the painter of the altarpiece was Bernt Notke, and it was funded by Sten Sture the Elder. In the drawing, the currently existing shrine is seen in the foreground, but behind and above it is a large framed image, interpreted as a detached part of a fifteenth-century winged altarpiece with scenes from the legend of St Eric, attached to the choir screen. The framed image shows the interior of a church, with two kneeling pilgrims at the centre praying in front of a large Gothic shrine. At the lower edge of the painting, a text refers to a translation of the relics of St Eric in 1257: "*Translate sunt reliquie eius a(n)no d(omi)ni MCCLVII*".[280] The shrine rests on top of a bier, but not on the church floor, and yet the drawing does not show how it is supported. A cloth with leaf patterns is on the bier under the shrine; it hangs from the bier and touches the church floor.

The accuracy of this lost painting as a depiction of a lost shrine is clearly debatable among historians. Bengtsson argues that the altarpiece was always more of an illustration of the legend of St Eric than a realistic rendering of the shrine or the church space. An eyewitness description from 1567 proves that the actual shrine was rather large, chapel-shaped, with towers and spires, and made of gilt silver. As Bengtsson observes, towers are not prominent in the shrine of the lost

[279] Bengtsson 2010, 138–140.

[280] Bengtsson 2010, 45–60; 133–140; Bengtsson 2013, 184–196.

altarpiece. A new image was attached to the shrine in 1531, but no images are seen on the altarpiece either.[281] Another question bothering researchers has been the size and structure of the shrine in the picture. In comparison to the two pilgrims, it looks enormous, probably too heavy to be carried on a bier, although documents from the beginning of the 16th century mention that it was carried in processions – a new bier had been made in 1527.[282] One explanation for the proportions might be the hieratic scale, underlining the superiority of the shrine in comparison to the pilgrims.[283] Considering the style, Bygdén considered the Shrine of St Eric might have served as a model for the so-called Hemming shrine in Turku,[284] which was made some decades later. The most striking common feature between the shrine depicted in Uppsala and the existing shrine in Turku are the leaf ornaments adorning the gables; similar type of leaves are depicted on the gables of the lost shrine of St Birgitta in the wall painting of 1437 from Tensta church.

The current shrine, made in 1574–1579, is strictly speaking after the Reformation and so outside the time frame of this study; it is also the most recent extant Nordic piece made for the purposes of the medieval cult of relics. An eclectic composition of varied renaissance and early baroque elements, it is decorated with etched, carved, sculpted and relief figures and patterns. The iconography does not contain direct references to St Eric, but is instead dominated by various kinds of angel figures. The stamps of the goldsmith Hans Rosenfeldt and the preserved documents attest to his authorship; he collaborated with the goldsmiths Gilius Coyet and Willem Boy.[285] The structure is detachable from the base and could be lifted up in order to reveal a smaller, wooden, velvet-covered casket with relics inside.[286] A similar structure seems to have existed in the last shrine of St Olaf in Nidaros – in Uppsala, this structure may have been used a few times during the brief Catholic revival. For most of its history, however, the shrine had been enclosed in a latticed tomb through which it was not

[281] Bygdén 1954, 349; Bengtsson 2010, 57–60; 139.
[282] Bengtsson 2010, 140.
[283] Bygdén 1954, 344.
[284] Bygdén 1954, 341–342.
[285] Bygdén 1954, 360–364; Källström 1954, 418–423; Bengtsson 2010, 124.
[286] Källström 1954, 411.

very visible; currently, the lattice is open and the shrine is visible but protected behind a glass case.

### 2.7 The Suspended Shrine of St Kjeld and Other Lost Shrines

As seen above, Nordic shrines made for the bodies of local saints were often full-body reliquaries; however, some of them may have been smaller. Ekroll has noted that if the exhumation and translation happened after the body had become a skeleton, then a smaller shrine would suffice.[287] But it is the house or chapel-shaped caskets – approximately half-body size and made for all the bones of a saint – that are the "archetypal" reliquaries already depicted in images from the early Middle Ages. It is on two reliquaries of this type, for instance, that King Harold swears his oath in the Bayeux Tapestry. Although it cannot be confirmed, at least some of the shrines covered in this chapter were probably also of this type.

St Kjeld was a local Danish saint venerated in Viborg after his translation in 1189. His relics were kept in a casket in the cathedral there until it was destroyed by fire in 1726. Two eighteenth-century descriptions reveal how the "ark" or *skrin* of St Kjeld looked. Summarising both, it was probably somewhere between the shrine of St Olaf and the smaller Swedish and Norwegian caskets described below. It was made of gilt copper or brass with a wooden core, 90 cm long, narrow, and decorated with long-necked dragon heads on the gables. Inside were St Kjeld's bones wrapped in silk and some smaller caskets. At the time – that is, before the fire – it was behind the (high) altar, but according to historian Henry Petersen it had previously hung above the altar, attached by gilt chains to two large rings that could be seen in the vaults above. One fragment responding to the descriptions was found in the ruins of the church – a typical Nordic dragon-head from one of the ends of the gable roof, made of gilt bronze. In the mouth of the dragon is a small loop that could have been strong enough to hold the casket if it had hung from a chain.[288] This would make sense, as elsewhere in the world, smaller reliquaries of various types have been hung above altars like this.[289] The fragment

[287] Ekroll 2002, 71; Bartlett 2013, 265–266.
[288] Petersen 1888, 110–114.
[289] Van Os 2000, 117; Hahn 2013, 203.

confirms that the original twelfth-century casket was not replaced by a newer one. It is surprising that it survived confiscations and the Reformation's vilification of Catholic objects, but it might have been hidden at that point, and restored later, when antiquarian interest in historical objects began to gather pace in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Nordic house-shaped caskets, in fact, seem to have survived better than most other reliquaries.

In addition to the famous shrine of St Olaf, Nidaros Cathedral also had the corpses of two other local saints: St Augustin or Eystein – formerly the twelfth-century Archbishop Øystein Erlendsson that had promoted the cult of St Olaf – and the lesser known St Bernhard. According to the sixteenth-century confiscation list, St Augustin's shrine was larger and more valuable; it was made of gilt silver, while St Bernhard's was of gilt copper.[290] They were probably smaller full-body shrines with some stylistic similarities to St Olaf's. Two other major shrines to local saints were made or commissioned in twelfth-century Norway, possibly in the same style – the shrines of St Hallvard, which was already discussed earlier in this chapter, and St Sunniva. The cult of martyred princess Sunniva and her companions, the "Selje-men", began in Selje, where an episcopal see and an abbey were founded. In 1170, a new shrine to St Sunniva was probably made in Bergen for the translation of her body there, while another shrine or casket with her relics may have remained in Selje.[291] In *Sverres saga*, the Sunniva shrine performs a miracle by stopping a fire in Bergen from spreading when it is carried out of the church,[292] and according to an episcopal document from Bergen in circa 1327, local farmers used to donate some of their flour to her shrine, expecting the saint to support

[290] Ekroll 2002, 89.

[291] Nicolaysen 1888, 3–4; Stavanger Cathedral, for instance, had bones of St Sunniva and her companions and even parts of their boat according to the relic list in 1517 ("*beyn af sancte Swnniue oc hennis medherfylgare oc aff teris skib*"), DN 4:1074. The Stiklestad church had the bones of St Ivan, St George, and the Selje saints. Fett 1909, 141; see also Grieg 1973, 21.

[292] *Sverres saga*, kap. 150.

the growth of their crops in return.[293] It seems the shrine was lost during the destruction of Bergen's Christ Church in 1531[294]

In Skara, the earthly remains of a local bishop known as Brynolf had become a cult object for 150 years already before gaining papal acceptance. In St Birgitta's vision in 1349, the Virgin Mary had expressed her disapproval of the fact that Bishop Brynolf's remains in Skara Cathedral had not yet been transferred from their underground tomb to a casket or shrine.[295] There are reports, however, in the bishops of Skara's chronicles that by 1413 or 1414, the remains were eventually put "in a more suitable place" – perhaps an overground tomb.[296] At this point, the bishop's bones were washed, and the water then used for healing.[297] Probably some of it was also kept as a source for contact relics. An official translation to a new shrine was also performed in 1492, even though the papal licence for it only arrived between 1497–1499, when Brynolf was declared *beatus* (blessed). Nothing is known about that shrine, but in 1517, Bishop Vincentius was apparently collecting silver and gold for another shrine to St Brynolf.[298] Building a new shrine so soon after the previous enshrinement could imply that either the previous shrine was made of humbler materials, such as wood, or that it had been stolen. In 1511, the Danes attacked and, according to the bishop, had robbed their storages, closets, coffins, and boxes – some of these Swedish words might also be referring to reliquaries here.[299]

At roughly the same time as Brynolf of Skara, Hemming of Turku, Nils Hermansson of Linköping, and Ingrid of Skänninge were also declared *beati*. However, these three others were translated slightly later, during the early 16th century as this possibly gave their churches more time to collect money for the celebrations and shrines that this

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[293] DN VII: 120; see also Hamre 1992, 155.

[294] It has been suggested that the shrine was temporarily saved by sending it to the abbey at Munkeliv, but it would not have been safe there for long – Munkeliv was already secularised in the same year, and abolished in 1536. See Luthen 1997.

[295] Revelations 4, 108.

[296] Pernler 2004, 69–71.

[297] Pernler 2004, 81.

[298] Pernler 2004, 77; "[…] *saa myget gwl oc sölf som Sancti Brynolfs skrijn kan fulkomnes med, som nw begynth ær* […]", Styffe 1884, 576.

[299] *gömer, kistor, stockar, fathebur, archer;* Pernler 2004, 69–73.

entailed. The shrines of St Hemming and St Ingrid have been discussed above, but the existing information regarding the shrine of Nils Hermansson in Linköping is just as limited as it is for the history of St Brynolf's Shrine. The translation was celebrated in Linköping Cathedral in 1515 and on 4 February, but no description of the shrine remains, only references to his previous tomb.[300] Papal indulgences were granted in 1518 for those who visited his relics and contributed to the conservation and augmentation of their "ornaments" (i.e. reliquary or reliquaries).[301] Åke Nisbeth suggests that the shrine made for the translation was wooden and possibly similar to the shrine associated with St Hemming in Turku Cathedral. After all, the designer of Hemming's Shrine, Hemming Gadh, was Bishop *Electus* in Linköping at that time and could have suggested similar ideas there, even if the actual translation of Nils Hermansson was actually organised by Bishop Hans Brask.[302]

In St Karlung's Church (*Karlskyrka*) in Roslagen, Sweden, the relics of St Karlung had been venerated since the 13th century. According to local tradition, his body had been exhumed soon after burial, wrapped in silk and laid in an oak casket, which was probably full-sized. A large chapel-shaped oak shrine for St Karlung's relics still existed in the church in 1635, and a small silver casket of a similar shape was inside it. We know this from a drawing and notes written about the two reliquaries by the Swedish antiquarian J.H. Rhezelius.[303] Based on the drawing (see image 12), the larger casket or shrine has been dated to come from the late thirteenth or early 14th century, which would correspond with existing knowledge about the cult of St Karlung.[304] It seems the casket was attached to a bier;[305] that trefoil crests were on top of the lid and its lower edge; that the long sides were decorated with rounded trefoil relief arches supported by pillars;

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[300] Lundén 1963, 28–29.

[301] *pro ornamentis corporis Prelibati Sancti Nicolai conservandis et augendis, ut debito in honore habeatur*, DN 17:1183.

[302] Nisbeth 2001, 13–15. For more on Nils Hermansson's reliquaries, see also below in the chapter on pyxes.

[303] Lundén 1944, 188–193; SK 113, Uppl., Karlskyrka.

[304] Carlsson 1919, 344.

[305] Norberg & Wilcke-Lindqvist 1967, 896.

and that the roof-like lid had a pattern of alternating larger and smaller circles on it. These patterns may have functioned as frames for metallic relief images of saints, as in the Odense shrines. Stylistically, the shrine also resembles the Hemming shrine in Turku Cathedral, albeit without the canopy.

The small silver casket of St Karlung has no details in the drawing, and it is anyway very small. If the large shrine was full-body size, then the small one would be no larger than a book. However, their real sizes are not known. According to Rhezelius, a small bone relic of St Karlung was kept in the small casket, which was kept inside the large casket, while the rest of the saint's remains were buried outside the church. This meant the large casket was now mostly empty and, in Rhezelius' interpretation, functioned as a *reconditorium* – a container for the relic and small casket.[306] The cult around these caskets remained active after the Reformation, until archbishop Laurentius Paulinus Gothus discovered this in 1641 and ordered the destruction of the saints' bones. Why the bones are referred to in plural in the report of the archbishop's visit is not clear; if Rhezelius' notes were correct, only one bone must have been found in the casket. However, at least one of the caskets and the bier continued to exist for at least thirty years more even if after that their destiny is not known. Lundén suggests the silver casket was melted down and the material reused elsewhere.[307]

Knowledge of the existence of certain reliquaries, even those as large as full-body shrines, has all but disappeared with the shrines themselves and the loss of written documents about them. By chance, the only mention of these precious objects may be in an account of a payment made for it, or its position in a procession, or a record of its destruction. Fragmentary anecdotes indicate the past existence of several casket reliquaries like this, without giving any indication of their sizes. In Närke diocese, St Torgils' shrine in Kumla church seems to have housed the whole body of the church's patron saint, from at least 1431. Documents regarding the shrine that do remain recount its maintenance: they reveal that Torgils' relics were kept in a footed

[306] Lundén 1944, 192.

[307] Lundén 1944, 193; Bygdén 1954, 330. See also Nyman 2002, 249–251.

shrine, which was repaired or decorated at several stages in its history, especially in 1515 for the saint's translation.[308] In another such example, the tomb or shrine made for St Helena in Skövde was the pride of the small town and attracted pilgrims, but no description of the shrine itself exists, just the news of its destruction in the Reformation by Bishop Abraham Angermannus in 1596. [309] Meanwhile, the seventeenth-century chronicle by Werwing generally refers to the destroyed shrines of saints as "monuments or graves",[310] which implies there had been a cult of the saints' relics but does not indicate for sure if the relics were eventually translated from a tomb to a shrine. As for St David of Munktorp, his relics were in a "silver coffin" and, according to an eighteenth-century source, this was kept in a small vaulted room called "the tomb of St David" and was visited by pilgrims that travelled long distances to venerate it.[311] His head and arm were in separate reliquaries, but it is hard to say if the silver coffin was full-body size or somewhat smaller.

A different, indirect reference to a reliquary is included in the thirteenth-century legend of St Botvid. In the passage considering the elevation of his relics, they are praised as "more precious than all skilfully sculpted bronze".[312] This sounds like a local version of the worldwide trope often repeated: that relics of saints were perceived as "more precious than gold". [313] As mentioned earlier, relics were compared to gold, silver and gems as these were considered the only incorruptible materials, and so worthy of the heavenly Jerusalem. In this case, the author refers specifically to sculpted bronze – the easiest explanation would be that a bronze casket was used for Botvid's relics in Botkyrka church.

Other local shrines or tombs of saints were made for the cults of St Magnhild in Lund, St Sigfrid in Växjö, St Eskil in Strängnäs, St Holger in Skokloster, and St Ragnhild in Tälje. All these were mentioned by Werwing as having been destroyed by Bishop Abraham in the late 16th

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[308] *Kumla kyrkas räkenskaper*, CIII, CXIX, 10–11, 98, 160.
[309] Lundén 1944, 133; Werwing 1746, 294.
[310] Werwing 1746, 294.
[311] Grau 1754, 284; 365.
[312] Trotzig 1987, 59.
[313] See e.g. Montgomery 2010, 59.

century, but nothing else is known about them except their destruction.[314]

Roskilde Cathedral's *Breviarium* of 1517 states that the body of St Oswald was in the Cathedral "in its entirety" (*integraliter*).[315] This should imply that it had a large shrine, but nothing more is known about its appearance. In Lund Cathedral, the Saints Marinus, Euphrosina and Florentia – were all three venerated in large shrines. Their importance in the church is demonstrated by the Latin officium for the *festum reliquiarum* in Lund from 1517, in which their relics are the only ones directly addressed in the Matins hymn, together with the relic of the holy Cross, *ligno Domini*.[316] Given their central liturgical role in the diocese and the late-medieval wealth of the cathedral, their caskets must have been costly and impressive. St Marinus' shrine is not described in detail in the late-medieval *Ordo in ostensione sanctarum reliquiarum* list; instead, it is mentioned as the largest of the three large copper caskets that were placed near the archbishop's sacristy in the north part of the high choir and carried on biers around the town during the major processions such as the rogation days. The two other large copper shrines were not attributed to any saint; instead, they both had a large variety of different relics. One of these other copper caskets is only described as "long" (as one might expect them all to have been), the other was supported by four lion figures and illustrated with thirty-two images on all sides. The shrines of St Euphrosina and St Florentia are listed in a series of three wooden shrines that were usually kept in the lowest place for reliquaries in the sacristy and carried around Lund in times of draught in order to pray for rain. The shrine that contained almost the entire body of St Euphrosina was made of cypress wood and had a broken lid without lock; the shrine containing almost all the bones of St Florentia had a proper lid, but the lock was useless. The third and largest of the three

[314] Werwing 1746, 294–295; Pirinen 1996, 32; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 82. As Källström observes (Källström 1939, 261), confiscation documents from Srängnäs do not contain any mention of metal parts from St Eskil's Shrine, so it was perhaps entirely made of wood. The same may be so for the other local shrines whose other details are unknown.

[315] DK. Roskilde, 1639–1640.

[316] Lundén 1946, 125–129.

wooden shrines had two gilt locks, a small casket attached to its lid, and the head of an unnamed member of the 11,000 Virgins[317] and several other relics.[318] The casket attached to the lid brings to mind the casket on top of St Ingrid's Shrine in Vadstena, but the similarity cannot be verified.

### 2.8 An Imagined Shrine: the Painted Altarpiece in Västerås

The last shrine to be discussed only exists in a painting on an altarpiece – apparently it never existed as a real object. Instead, I suggest that it was the altarpiece itself that was meant to replace the shrine.

Sten Sture the younger and his wife Kristina Gyllenstierna donated a large altarpiece to Västerås Cathedral in 1516. It is a winged retable, made in Antwerp, with sculpted and painted scenes of the Passion. One of the painted panels on the outside of the wings (see image 13) depicts two objects that could be identified as reliquaries, even if not from Västerås. The painting is of the kind of devotional service that would be performed on a saint's day in front of the altarpiece. A cleric stands before the altar holding a gilt or golden casket of vaguely architectural shape, with a slim tower in each corner. Behind and above the altar, a structure resembling a saint's shrine stands on decorated, Gothic arched legs.[319] The scene, with the shrine structure in the background, continues onto the next panel, where a monstrance is held by a bishop in front of a group of kneeling worshippers – only one of them is seen in the more tightly cropped panel with the reliquaries. These two paintings can be seen when the doors of the retable are completely closed.

The retable was designed to be put behind the altar, where the full-body sarcophagus of a local saint (such as the one depicted in the retable's panel) would otherwise have been. According to Hans Belting, retables could in some cases be seen as "successors" to the shrines behind the altar, first as containers of relics, then as

[317] The 11,000 Virgins have a whole section to themselves in Chapter 8 here.
[318] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 101–105.
[319] Andersson 1980a, 199–200; Ekström 1976, 52–56; Roosval 1933, 155–178; Roosval 1934, 317.

independent objects of devotion.[320] Images could also be substituted for an unavailable relic.[321] Whose shrine would the retable be simultaneously referring to and substituting? A tentative explanation can be found when comparing it with contemporaneous events. Västerås had no local patron saint, but there were efforts to acquire one by transfering St David's remains from the nearby Munktorp Church, where they were venerated. In 1463, the Bishop of Västerås actually received the papal licence to transfer St David's body to his cathedral.[322] It is not certain whether the transfer actually took place, but documents of the Reformation indicate that both his "monument or tomb" and the reliquaries for his head and hand were discovered in the sixteenth century in Munktorp church, not in Västerås.[323] If Västerås did manage to get the saint's body, it could also have been the case that the shrine was made for the cathedral and then moved back to Munktorp in the 1520s, in an attempt to avoid confiscation, which the Bishop of Västerås must have known about, as Västerås was central in orchestrating the confiscation process.

During efforts to claim the relics, an *officium* of St David was produced in Västerås Cathedral, and his cult in general was developed. The altarpiece may have been part of the same project, either intended to improve the cathedral's chances of acquiring permission to transfer the relics or, failing this, to at least create a visual impression of the shrine's presence. The predella of the altarpiece has three separate spaces for relics, now empty, behind latticed doors. Those might have been used to house smaller relics of St David, while his shrine was still in Munkstorp. As recorded by several medieval documents from Central and South Europe, it was not unusual for two churches or abbeys to dispute the right to possess a saint's relics, or which of them had the authentic ones. As Erik Inglis points out in his recent article, pieces of art – paintings, illuminated

[320] See also below; Haastrup 1999, 283–284; Belting 1994, 443–453; Montgomery 1996, 214, note 39.
[321] See e.g. Belghaus 2011, 216.
[322] Odenius 1962, 33–37. The relationship between St David and Västerås is also discussed in Landelius 1991, 21–33, but without reference to the Sture altarpiece.
[323] Lundén 1944, 134; Källström 1939, 222; Werwing 1746, 294–295.

manuscripts, and reliquaries – were produced in order to prove the rightness of each contestant's claims.[324]

Reliquaries and maintaining a cult of relics were clearly important for Sten Sture the Younger; it would not be surprising if the regent had personally commissioned the theme for the three panels that did not show biblical scenes. If the above-mentioned painting representing the shrine of St Eric in Uppsala was commissioned by Sten Sture the Elder a few years earlier, it could thus be assumed that it was the Younger's idea to have an altarpiece depicting a shrine. In both cases, the altarpiece was not only an object of veneration, but also a votive gift.

The painting of the cleric holding the gilt casket in the Västerås panel brings to mind another recurring theme in medieval art: the heavenly or earthly patron (most often the patron saint) of the church holding a miniature model of the church. As we know, there are also reliquaries shaped like churches – discussed in the next section of this chapter. This means that some of the images of miniature churches might actually refer to existing objects, though generally they are interpreted as symbols of patronage. In the Västerås panel, the gilt object is most likely a reliquary; the shape of the object does not imitate Västerås Cathedral – nor the Cathedral of San Pietro in Rome, for that matter, even if art historian Gunnar Ekström assumed that the painting was intended to encourage the purchase of indulgences to raise funds for building it.[325] If the casket had been intended to symbolically represent either of these two cathedrals, the painter would certainly have made the casket more church-like.

A rare chance of comparing the depictions of a church model and a reliquary is available in Vä church, Scania, where two images of donors holding a church model and a reliquary have survived. In the damaged twelfth-century wall painting, the Danish King Niels holds a golden casket, which the art historian Ulla Haastrup has interpreted to be the reliquary containing relics of his brother, St Canute. Opposite Niels is his spouse, Queen Margaret Fredkulla, holding a

[324] Inglis 2014, 159–163.
[325] Ekström 1976, 52.

miniature church.[326] Haastrup compares the casket in King Nils' hands to the drawings of the reliquaries of St Canute and St Benedict in Odense, but I must add that the casket is strongly reminiscent of the one held by the cleric in the Västerås panel. As the Västerås painting is four hundred years younger than the wall paintings in Vä, there is no immediate connection between their commissioners. Nevertheless, it could be supposed that the Vä image – or even perhaps a corresponding casket – could have been seen by the painter of the Västerås panel. The similarity between the two seems too remarkable to be entirely coincidental.

Distant or unfamiliar shrines were depicted in Nordic paintings, too. In Denmark, St Nicholas of Myra is portrayed lying in his tomb in a fresco painting in Vigersted Church.[327] When the depicted tomb is located thousands of miles from the painting, it is safe to assume that the image is shaped by the painter's general idea of tombs, based on ones he has seen in nearby churches, not any knowledge of the original. The painting, dated to come from the 1450s, shows the full-body tomb as a grey structure with a row of lattice windows through which the body could be viewed. The tomb is depicted without a lid, and the bishop can be seen from above, as if sleeping in his full episcopal attire. The tomb appears to be on a low hill outdoors, and is being approached by sickly and anxious-looking pilgrims, probably reflecting similar scenes seen in local pilgrimage sites. It is not likely that many pilgrims from Vigersted actually visited the tomb of St Nicholas, but as the patron saint of the church, he must have been the object of prayers and celebrations.

### 2.9 Chapel-Shaped Caskets

Many of the full- or half-body caskets discussed above were probably shaped like chapels or houses, with a roof-like lid. Several smaller caskets of similar shape are also preserved in Nordic museums.[328] Most of those fall into three categories: Nordic caskets covered with

[326] Haastrup 2015, 10–24.

[327] DK, Ringsted herred: Vigersted kirke, 486–488. See image e.g. in Kuuliala 2015, 183 (here mistakenly captioned as St Canute Lavard).

[328] Nicolaysen, however, argues that houses and churches were not the models imitated by shrines. Nicolaysen 1888, 8; Grieg 1973, 20–32.

gilt copper plates with relief illustrations; enamelled reliquaries from Limoges or imitations of the Limoges style; and simple, wooden caskets that seem like modest imitations of the two more elaborate types. The smaller casket placed on the so-called St Hemming Shrine is the only surviving example of yet another type. It has not been possible to recognise any of these existing caskets in the medieval written sources, but I believe they correspond to some of the items defined with the same term used when referring to the full-body shrines – *skrin* or *scrinio.* The words *ask* or *eske* have also been used to refer to smaller reliquary caskets,[329] while in English art history, the French word *chasse* has been used to describe these small, chapel-shaped reliquaries. In this section we will be looking at examples of these in Nordic medieval documents and museums.

The Nordic terms for caskets vary, with the same term referring to caskets of different size and shape. Some *scrinio* reliquaries may also have been used as portable altars, like those from Lund discussed above. A *skrin* dedicated to an individual saint may seem to have been a full-body shrine like the ones discussed above, but when it turns out to have contained only a fragment of the saint, one may assume two things: (i) the reliquary did not need to fit the dimensions of an entire corpse; and (ii) the saint's presence could often be more symbolic than literal. These assumptions must remain hypothetical, however, as the following examples from medieval documents demonstrate.

**Lost caskets**

St Swithun's silver *skrin* was the treasure of Stavanger Cathedral, but it did not contain his entire body. The shape or illustrations of the reliquary are not known, but it must have been smaller than full-body size, since it only contained his arm with some smaller relics.[330] It may have been made as early as the 12th century, when a relic of St Swithun was brought from Winchester Cathedral to Stavanger. The reliquary might well have accompanied the relic, but as Sigurd Grieg suggests,

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[329] "*En liden Eske med reliqviis fra dend Hellige graff*". Trolle & Parsberg & Bartholin 1674, 175.

[330] DN 4:1074; Gjessing 1918, 267–269.

it may also have been made in Bergen to accommodate the holy limb.[331]

Kumla Church also must have had a relatively small reliquary casket for a relic from the early Roman martyr St Cecilia, as the body of the saint is venerated in Rome, and all we know is that in 1514, the reliquary was brought or repaired by a Brother Herman.[332] Likewise, the casket of St Ursula in Linköping Cathedral [333] was surely not for her whole body, as we know this was venerated in Cologne. Storkyrkan in Stockholm also had a large silver *skrin* at the altar dedicated to the two saintly "armies" from Cologne known as the 11,000 Virgins and the 10,000 Knights.[334] There were clearly enough of these two groups of relics from Cologne to fill any number of reliquaries. The Franciscan Abbey in Roskilde had altogether seven (or in another list, nine) of their heads in one large casket (*magno scrinio*).[335]

Another smallish casket, of gilt copper, existed in the early 16th century in Torekov, Scania, and has been interpreted as a reliquary because "plenty of idolatry" apparently accompanied it. According to the description, its width, depth and height were each approximately one metre.[336]

The church of St Alban in Odense had two small caskets for the relics of St Alban and St Oswald. Their design is not known, but they must have been among the earliest reliquaries in Nordic churches. According to the legend, St Canute brought a relic of the third-century martyr St Alban from England in the 11th century. The legend of St Canute also describes a dramatic event: when the enemy attacked the church in 1086, breaking the wall behind the altar from the outside, the two reliquaries fell from the altar to the floor. The moments before and after this destruction are portrayed in two seventeenth-century

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[331] Grieg 1973, 21.

[332] Kumla kyrkas räkenskapsbok 1421–1590, 98; xcix.

[333] Confiscation note: "old silver from S U *skrin*", interpreted by Källström as meaning St Ursula's, Källström 1939, 214.

[334] Kilström 1982, 373; Källström 1939, 256.

[335] SRD VIII, 276.

[336] Weibull 1904–1908b, 99: "*Item wdj Thorekow ett sckrin aff koper och well forgylth. Thet er vij quarter hogtth oc langtt oc bretth ther till. Ochzaa sckeer ther meghett affguderie mett thet schrin.*"

graphic prints, where the reliquaries appear as small, partly transparent seventeenth-century caskets with a roof-like lid. Their shape probably resembled reliquaries from the artist's own experience, as it was hardly possible he would have had contact with the original caskets that had most likely disappeared during the Reformation, if not earlier. Indeed, it seems even their size was unknown in seventeenth-century Odense, as when the two large coffins of St Canute and his brother Benedict were rediscovered in 1696, it was first suggested that Benedict's might be that of St Alban or St Oswald.[337]

Reliquaries defined as "houses" were included in the fifteenth-century reliquary list of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen. In some cases, the link between the iconography of the casket and the relics it contains is made explicit: for instance, two silver houses topped with a saintly figure had the relics of their respective saint among their contents – a "small house" dedicated to St Blasius, and a "new house" with a bishop on it probably representing St Magnus. The Cathedral also possessed a small ivory house with a gilt cross on top, and an ivory castle with two crystals in the middle.[338] In Riala, Sweden, a casket that was probably house-shaped and made of silver called "St Jacob's House" [339] is reported as having been confiscated. Its name probably referred to the pilgrimage site in Santiago de Compostela. Whether the reliquary listed as "Town called Copenhagen" from the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen can be counted among the house-shaped reliquaries is uncertain, but a potential parallel can be found in Soissons, France – this large extant reliquary depicts a group of local churches in miniature.[340]

Architectural shapes, particularly towers and arches, were frequently imitated in the details of monstrances and pyxes, but the

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[337] Jørgensen 1898–99, 256–308; Burman Becker 1886, 36; Vellev 1986, 124. St Alban's head was apparently also venerated in Selje, while Roskilde Cathedral, in its *Breviarium* of 1517, claimed to have St Oswald's entire body. See DK, Roskilde, 1639–1640.

[338] SRD VIII, 262–264.

[339] "*ett sankte Jakobs hus*", Källström 1939, 118.

[340] SRD VIII, 262–266; Braun 1940, planche 1; Jexlev 1976, 44. See also Dor (s.d.), 42. On the meanings of miniaturisation in medieval art, see Immonen & Räsänen 2018.

term "house" was probably reserved to caskets. A reliquary called "St Anthony's Tower" could be interpreted as a house-shaped vessel, too, but the additional use of crystal and a bell point more towards a monstrance.[341] The relics were obviously visible through the crystal, while the "tower" may have been illustrated with a two- or three-dimensional image of the saint. Without such an image, his relic would have to have been the largest or prominently placed under the crystal for the reliquary to be recognised as primarily representing him.

**Caskets with reliefs**

The characteristically Nordic chapel-shaped reliquaries with dragon-headed gables have already been mentioned in the context of St Olaf and St Kjeld's shrines. Those that remain are smaller versions of those shrines, it is thought – and they could have been listed as "houses" in medieval reliquary lists. Five of such caskets survive from the thirteenth-century, and are described as having been produced by local goldsmiths working in Bergen. Three are from the Norwegian churches of Fortun, Filefjell and Hedal, the fourth casket from Flåvaer has lost its structure, now only consisting of its twelfth-century plates, while the fifth, now in the Danish National museum, was previously attributed to Vatnås Church.[342] They are made from wood and covered with gilt copper plates illustrated with saints in relief. Local and universal details coexist in the Norwegian caskets as with their larger counterparts: their roofs evoke Norwegian stave churches with crests, bargeboards, animal-headed gables and a cross in the middle. The dragon heads even carry references to pre-Christian Nordic themes, but they can also be interpreted as mainly decorative without diminishing their contribution to the visual whole of a reliquary.[343] Instead of feet, most of the caskets are supported by an arcade, representing an internationally renowned element of prestigious architecture, characteristic also of early reliquary caskets such as the

[341] *In turri Sancti Anthonii cum cristallo & una campana* (---), SRD VIII, 262.

[342] These caskets are discussed in Grinder-Hansen 2003, 159–172; Kielland 1927, 97–116; Undset 1878, 64–65; 86; Ström 1784, 258.

[343] Schirmer 1905, 75–80.

ones depicted in the eleventh-century Bayeux Tapestry;[344] and the gilt relief plates are not only related to earlier Nordic full-body shrines, but also to the "Golden Altars".[345]

The figures on most of the caskets depict the apostles with Christ in the middle. The relation between the iconography and contents of these caskets is uncertain; the images may have been intended as general references to the heavenly community rather than allusions to specific relics. As characterised by archaeologist Sigurd Grieg, the relief figures in the gilt copper plates combine Byzantine "body language" with French-influenced, early Gothic-style clothing.[346] One aspect that suggests the casket of Filefjell and the anonymous casket in the Danish National Museum at least have common origins, is that both have apostle figures made with the same stencil.[347] The casket of Hedal (see image 14), which Grieg defines as dating from later in the 13th century than the others, is illustrated with narrative scenes of the martyrium of St Thomas Becket and the life of Christ; while, according to Nicolaysen, a figure in one of the gables is possibly the oldest known representation of St Olaf. Nicolaysen has also observed that two of the scenes depicted here were found in an Icelandic version of the legend of St Thomas Becket, which could point towards an Icelandic goldsmith. Despite that, Nicolaysen ends up suggesting that the hagiographic source must have been an older one, and so not necessarily Icelandic.[348] Without going further into the iconography, I would argue that a likely source of visual and thematic influence lies in the dozens of enamelled caskets from Limoges that were spreading throughout Europe at this time with images of St Thomas' beheading in Canterbury (Nicolaysen was only aware of two) – at least one such casket found its way to the North, as we shall see below. The Hedal casket also differs from the other Norwegian caskets in that it lacks the bottom arcade, which it once probably had. The silhouette of a

[344] Roesdahl 1977, 26–33.

[345] See below in the *Tabula* section of Chapter 3. Figures of saints in these Norwegian reliquaries have also been seen as possible stylistic peers for those adorning certain sculpted altarpieces in Sweden and Finland; see Nordman 1964, 81–83.

[346] Grieg 1973, 21.

[347] Grinder-Hansen 2003, 160.

[348] Nicolaysen 1888, 4–24.

'restored' version of it, with feet and arcade, is featured in the coat of arms for the Sør-Aurdal region in Norway.

In the Fortun casket, the plates of the roof are lost, and with them, the possible crests, dragon heads or other typical details. Unlike the others, however, the Fortun casket also contains a textual element: on the *corpus* of the casket, a row of letters is painted on an enamelled copper stripe below the seated apostles. It begins with the letters of the alphabet followed by text that seems nonsensical at first sight (*morvinioom*), but this has since been interpreted to be Virgil's "love conquers all" (*amor vincit Omnia*). This casket and text have been discussed by Norwegian archaeologists and art historians since the 19th century. As the archaeologist Arne J. Larsen puts it, the words were probably explained to the congregation as referring to the love of God, while the casket was being carried in church, even if the artisan responsible for painting the letters failed to write them correctly.[349]

Two earlier chapel-shaped caskets that have survived come from Jäla and Eriksberg (in Västergötland, Sweden), ca. 1150–1200. These also have apostle reliefs in gilt copper plates on oak, and both seem to come from the same workshop, which supposedly was in Lund.[350] Unlike their Norwegian counterparts their gables feature animal rather than dragon heads, and they stand on animal feet instead of arcades. The illustrations are of rows of saints framed by round arcades and ornamental patterns. Exceptionally, there is no need to wonder if the iconography is a direct reference to the relics, because these are explicitly listed in engraved text bands on both caskets. The Eriksberg casket (see image 16) is illustrated with the apostles, a bishop and an angel, and the text announces that the relics include fragments of the Holy Sudarium, of the head of St Pancras, blood of St Vincent, of the holy bishops Melano and Bobino, of St Sabina, the Virgin Mary, St Andrew, and the True Cross. The last words in the

[349] Christie 1842, 381; Larsen 1997, 101–104. -The sentence is repeated, both in correct and misspelled versions, also in early-fourteenth-century brooches found in Lödöse; see Rydbeck 1964, 244. Grieg suggests that the misspelling indicates a lay craftsperson as opposed to a monastic workshop; see Grieg 1973, 25.

[350] Bygdén 1954, 326; the theory on the Lund workshop by Aron Andersson, cited in Grieg 1973, 17.

inscription, "*Clemens Leder*", refer either to the maker or commissioner of the casket. As for the Jäla casket, the images are of the apostles holding books, while the relics announced in the inscription come from further afield: the 11,000 Virgins, the Holy Sepulchre, St John the Baptist's head, St Julian, and St Alexander. Some of the metal plates are missing.[351] The texts reveal that the correspondence between the images and relics is not exact. The relics mentioned on the Eriksberg casket could be associated with the images of the bishop (the two holy bishops) and the apostles (St Andrew), but the image of the angel cannot represent any of the other relics in the list. Although these two examples can hardly serve as an iconographic key to all other illustrated caskets, it can give us a general direction for their interpretation: an intended correspondence exists, but it is not a comprehensive report of the contents. The iconographic choices might of course be based on things unrelated to the contents.

**Limoges caskets**

Chapel-shaped caskets of gilt copper with a Limoges enamelling were common in Nordic churches, too. A fair few have been preserved, although only a couple of enameled reliquaries can be found in the written documents.[352] Some lost objects described as "houses" may well have been Limoges caskets, too, as most of the descriptions omitted colours and other details anyway. There are at least thirteen different surviving caskets or fragments of that type in Nordic museums and churches. Limoges caskets mostly date from the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries and are among the first reliquaries purchased from abroad when Christianity was establishing itself in the North. Some of the surviving caskets are possibly imitations of the famous Limoges style, but produced elsewhere in the Rhein region or even in the Nordic countries. The common denominators for all of these are the enameled copper plates on a

[351] SHM 5561; "*De sudario quod fuit circa caput ihesu in sepulcro de capite sco Pancratio de sanguine sci Vincentii; de scs episcopis melano et bobino, de sca savina et reliqvie sca virginum de sco andrea aplo (&) sca cruce clemens leder.*"; Västergötlands museum, inv.nr. 1503; See also Grinder-Hansen 1999, 71–72; on their post-Reformation histories, see Zachrisson 2017, 140–142.

[352] See SDHK 9346; Ekroll 2002, 89; Nicolaysen 1862–66, 428.

wooden, chapel-shaped core. The structures have low, rectangular or animal-like feet, and their roofs are sometimes crested or ornamented with dragon heads or crosses. The enameled images vary from narrative and sophisticated to symbolic and simple. Many caskets have a door in one or both of the gables, whereas others can be opened by lifting the roof. The size of the enameled caskets is smaller than the reliefed caskets discussed above.

The oldest representatives of Limoges production in the North, dating from the late 12th century, are casket from Uppsala Cathedral and an anonymous one in the Danish National Museum. Typical for both is a simple shape, with no roof crests, but a sophisticated illustration with a predominantly golden background. The Danish casket has lost most of its gilt copper plates, but the remaining plates include a detailed and colourful image of the Adoration of the Kings.[353] The Uppsala casket (see image 18a-c) has an ornamental back, while one of its long sides is clearly marked as a façade or front with depictions on it of the Calvary group, Christ in mandorla, the Evangelists, and the apostles. As art historian Britt-Marie Andersson observes, St Peter and St Paul are also depicted in the gables with St Peter tellingly positioned on the door guarding the access to the relics.[354] In fact, St Peter is also depicted on the doors of the caskets in Aust-Agder (Norway) and another anonymous Limoges casket in the Danish National Museum, possibly from Sorø Abbey; the guardian of the gates of Heaven is guarding the access to heavenly treasures, the earthly remains of saints residing in Heaven.

These narrative illustrations on the Limoges caskets used the same hagiographical imagery as *libellus* books – the illustrated lives of saints especially aimed at nuns or laypeople.[355] Lively narrative images can be seen on two Nordic thirteenth-century caskets, too, and they must have enriched the religious experience of those who got the chance to view them in detail. The casket associated to Sorø Abbey is illustrated with scenes of the early childhood of Christ,[356] and a casket from Trönö church (see image 19) narrates the martyrdom of St Thomas

[353] Andersson 1980b, 8–9; DNM item 9110 (marked by Andersson as 9112).
[354] Andersson 1980b, 8–10; Andersson 1982, 98; Bengtsson 2010, 146.
[355] Hahn 2001, 21–24.
[356] http://samlinger.natmus.dk/DMR/asset/168146 (cited 5.3.2017)

Becket – a theme often depicted in an identical way on Limoges caskets. The crest on the Trönö casket (dating from around 1210) features Norwegian-style dragon heads, which were probably added only after the casket arrived in the North. Andersson suggests it could have been donated to Trönö church from a larger church at some point.[357]

The Spånga casket from Stockholm (see image 17) differs from the other Limoges caskets in that it has animal feet and a distinct shape created by a transept. Illustrations on it include Christ, an angel, a knight (possibly St George), the Virgin Mary, and two of the Evangelists.[358] As Martina Bagnoli has remarked, these caskets seldom contained the relics of the depicted saints – the enamelers of Limoges clearly focused on enshrining the narratives instead.[359]

Thirteenth-century Limoges caskets are generally more simply illustrated than the earlier ones. The casket in Ullånger has a pattern of angel figures in circular frames and, according to Andersson, it shows the beginning of a period of decline for the Limoges casket.[360] Maybe the next stage in this development is the fragment in the Oslo Museum of Culture History, also with angels in circular frames.[361] An interesting characteristic of one such casket from Visingsö are the nearly ornamental, flat copper relief figures of saints attached in rows of three along one long side so that their heads stick out above the edge of the roof. Like in the Uppsala casket, the remaining long side is purely ornamental, and unlike most others of its kind, the hinged opening is on the ornamental side. The saints depicted have not been identified, but then neither were they meant to be – these elongated figures have been used in several other pieces from Limoges.[362]

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[357] Cornell 1918, 262–263; Salvén (red.) 1913, 9. Hildebrand mentions a casket in Cologne that could be similar: Hildebrand 1903, 630; Andersson 1980b, 10–11; Tegnér 1999, 199–204; Gauthier 1972, 38; Gauthier 1986, 86.

[358] SHM 3028.

[359] Bagnoli 2010, 158–159.

[360] Cornell 1918, 263–264; Andersson 1980b, 11; Tegnér 1999, 200–202.

[361] OMCH C11570, C10383, C603, C25957.

[362] Andersson 1980b, 11; 55. Similar elements – the rows of relief figures and the checkered ornamental back with an opening – are found in a Norwegian casket fragment, see Horgen et al. (s.d.), 84.

During the Reformation, these chapel-shaped caskets probably escaped confiscation because there was relatively little gold or silver used in their production.[363] Although they are clearly reliquaries and could hardly be mistaken as Lutheran, they were still appreciated and kept on display in certain churches for more than a century afterwards.[364]

**Fragmented caskets**

When there are only fragments remaining of a lost medieval object, it is particularly challenging to identify its function. Archaeologist Else Roesdahl has attempted this with the fragments of a small box found in Viborg: the style of one metal fragment has allowed her to date it to the 10th century, while its small scale and arcaded patterns convinced her that it was not a profane container for personal belongings, but a reliquary – in fact the earliest found in Denmark.[365] Several other fragments in Nordic museum collections have been identified as parts of lost caskets too: there are dragon heads, figures of saints, columnettes, and lids. Smaller metal details, such as quatrefoil or coin-like paillettes of silver or gilt copper can only be linked to reliquaries on a hypothetical basis.[366]

In other cases, when several fragments exist of an item, a reconstruction of the original shape is possible. In the Swedish History Museum, a group of fragments from Vreta Abbey have been identified as possibly being parts of the same reliquary: the object seems to have been an octagonal, architecturally decorated pyx from around the year 1200, surrounded by columns and relief figures of saints and topped with a structure resembling a round tower with cupola and several round niches or side-chapels.[367] At some point, possibly in the 19th century, an enamelled Limoges reliquary from the 13th century was reconstructed from fragments of four different ones in the Cultural History Museum Collection of Oslo.[368] In Hundorp

[363] Andersson 1980b, 8.
[364] Thordeman 1964, 13; 89; Broman 1912–1953 (1900), 555; Bengtsson 2010, 146.
[365] Roesdahl 1977, 26–33.
[366] See e.g. Grieg 1973, 24.
[367] SHM 18011: 62, 105. A "chapel-reliquary" (*capella reliquiarum*) with a somewhat similar shape is depicted in Bock 1867, 12.
[368] Horgen et al. (s.d.), 84.

Church, a different kind of transformation happened (probably in the eighteenth century), when the gables of a Limoges reliquary and nine elements from a Limoges cross were fitted into the sides and lid of a simple pine casket.[369]

Simple, wooden chapel-shaped caskets from between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries have survived in Swedish churches. These are not fragments, but rather painted and gilt "imitations" of metal-covered caskets, that copy certain elements from them such as a crested roof (in Skog), dragon head gables (in Ilsbo; see image 20), an arcade below the container (in Frösö), or a ridge turret (in Eke). The casket from Eke, Gotland, is the only one of these rather worn caskets with visible traces of saintly iconography. It depicts St Olaf and Christ as a Man of Sorrows.[370] In their simplicity, they also recall the earlier Byzantine house-shaped reliquary boxes.[371]

With the exception of the caskets illustrated with images of St Olaf and St Thomas Becket, most of those still in existence are visually dedicated to biblical characters or unspecified saintly figures. It is uncertain whether or not they used to be known as reliquaries associated to the cult of specific saints. The Jäla and Eriksberga caskets, for instance, prove that the iconography and the relics were not always directly linked.

It has not been possible to establish a connection between these existing caskets and those named in medieval texts. According to the medieval reliquary lists, it seems there were also reliquaries that had no name, but were recognisable from their shape, material composition, and perhaps iconography. Their contents, possibly consisting of dozens of different relics, were what gave them their identity; but they were familiar to the congregation only insofar as they held the concentrated power of several saints – they did not belong to the cult of any one particular saint. The list of their contents

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[369] https://digitaltmuseum.no/011021909548/skrin (cited 5.3.2017)

[370] See Cornell 1918, 264–265; Bygdén 1954, 325; Lagerlöf & Stolt 1974, 527–529. –The Eke casket can also be compared to a Norwegian wooden miniature church whose original function is unclear; it is from Tuft church, Buskerud, and registered in Oslo Museum of Cultural History as nr. C10470

[371] See e.g. *Treasures of Heaven*, 38–39.

was probably written down and read aloud during relic feasts, and they contributed to the protective holiness of the church treasure.

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Large reliquary shrines of local saints were the destinations of pilgrimage; they presumably contained the entire body of the saint and ranged from stone tombs, like the one of St Henrik in Nousiainen, to architecturally ornamented wooden shrines like the so-called Hemming shrine in Turku, and to half-body-sized gilt bronze caskets suspended above the altar, like the lost one of St Kjeld in Viborg. They were adorned with votive gifts and often carried in procession outside the church. Their renewal or improvement was a crucial part of their maintenance, which usually required decades of fund-collecting. On the other hand, the transferral of the body to a new shrine was often accompanied by the acquisition of smaller reliquaries for some body-parts.

Most of those shrines are now lost, but they are often described as made of gilt metal plates over a wooden core. In the case of the shrines of St Olaf, St Birgitta and St Erik, these written descriptions can even be compared to medieval paintings, even if those cannot be taken as realistic depictions. In Västerås, a panel painting in the altarpiece may even depict a shrine that never existed, perhaps compensating for the lack of a local shrine.

While the shrines were of local production, the extant small caskets represent two different traditions of craftsmanship: gilt copper caskets with narrative relief images and dragon heads on the gables were made in Norway, apparently imitating the famous shrine of St Olaf, while several caskets with enameled illustrations were acquired mostly from Limoges. The smaller chapel-shaped caskets were usually not dedicated to one saint, but contained relics of several saints. Their imagery often included references to more than one saint, mainly to biblical figures, but a direct correlation between the imagery and the relics cannot be assumed.

## 3 – Altarpieces, Aumbries and Tablets

The objects discussed in this chapter have few things in common. Even amongst themselves, altarpieces, aumbries, tablets, books, and

pax tablets come in a large array of sizes, shapes and functions. As far as altarpieces, books and pax tablets are concerned, any relics in them are usually of secondary importance, which could qualify them to be what I call "secondary reliquaries". Aumbries, however, were specifically made to store reliquaries and sometimes to display them. Meanwhile, tablets seem to vary between small, portable or even wearable devotional instruments, and large altar frontlets. The reason they are all grouped together here is that they all have a more or less two-dimensional shape and that they can be understood, from the point of view of their liturgical functions, as something between the previously discussed, large and illustrated items – altars and caskets – and the ambiguous but often portable monstrances and other items that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

### 3.1 Altarpiece and Aumbry

The space behind and above the altar, previously occupied by large reliquary shrines, was gradually taken over by a new type of devotional object – the winged altarpiece. The primary purpose of the altarpiece was not to contain the relics, but some of them were built with shelves or niches for keeping relics or reliquaries and displaying them during feasts of the saints. As Belting has put it, when describing the Marienstatt altarpiece, "the retable brought the church's treasures together in one place, so that viewing of them could be controlled."[372] This idea of succession from reliquary to altarpiece is clearly manifest in the retables, whose shape made a direct reference to relic caskets. Examples of this kind of church-shaped, wingless retable exist, for instance, in Ala Church in Gotland, but the art historian Peter Tångeberg maintains that, unlike fourteenth-century German altarpieces, those in Gotland did not include relics.[373]

Several altarpieces in Nordic churches nevertheless contain an empty space for inserting relics or, in some cases, the Host.[374] It is usually painted in red, located in the predella, and hidden behind a

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[372] Belting 1994, 449; 453; Montgomery 1996, 214, note 39; Haastrup 1999, 283–284; see also van Os 2000, 122–123.
[373] Tångeberg 2005, 285.
[374] Ekström 1976, 56; Snoek 1995, 224.

lattice. The lattices allowed the relics to be seen, but not removed, which implies that the items would not be placed there for accessible, temporary storage, but rather with a permanent consecrating function in mind. Recently, niches for relics have also been discovered in the middle of images in the large-scale altarpieces as well as on the gables or on the reverse sides of Nordic altarpieces. The relics or reliquaries themselves have not been preserved, but the carved and painted images on the altarpieces and the size of the niches give clues to identifying the relic and its approximate size.[375]

As has just been indicated, most of the remaining Nordic altarpieces display only indirect references to the relics they may have contained, but as Lena Liepe has recently observed, at least three exceptions to this rule are known to have existed. These are altarpieces once built explicitly as relic cupboards, placing the relics or reliquaries at the very centre of attention. In the church of Løgum Abbey in Denmark, a two-wing altarpiece from circa 1325 still exists on the North wall of the choir. The wings, when opened, reveal a corpus divided into sixteen small niches for relics and on the inner sides of the wings are a corresponding set of images of the respective saints, painted in order so that each relic can be identified.[376] A small cupboard-like altarpiece from the 16th century (see image 21a-b) is preserved from Övre Ullerud (Värmland), Sweden. It has about thirty small niches for relics behind the two wings, and a damaged painting of the Visitation on the outside. It seems parchment *authentica* still existed on each niche as late as the eighteenth century.[377] The third example from Bryrup (Jutland), Denmark is less certain, as the altarpiece no longer exists. Here, we are told, the spaces interpreted as relic compartments were above the respective images of each saint.[378]

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[375] Art historian Vera Moore has also written on altarpiece niches in her unpublished Bachelor's thesis *Fyra senmedeltida konstverk med mecklenburgiskt ursprung från skånska kyrkor*, Åbo Akademi, 2009.

[376] The original location is not certain as the altarpiece was moved during church renovations, but art historian Ulla Haastrup has argued that it originally stood on the altar. See Haastrup 1999, 283; DK: Løgum klosterkirke, 180–182; 1104–1106; Liepe 2014, 45.

[377] Gallen–Norberg 1982, 58; Borgström 1915; Liepe 2014, 45.

[378] DK: Bryrup, 3921–3922; Liepe 2014, 45.

The reliquary cupboards, also known as almeries or aumbries, are related to the relic-filled altarpieces above, only they were not primarily made for displaying relics and reliquaries, but for simply storing them. Yet, these cupboards could also have an element of display. In the former Cistercian abbey church of Sorø, Denmark, an in-built aumbry with a text referring to the saints is preserved in a wall near the altar. It was made around the years 1525–1530. The aumbry is now empty, but some of its history seems to be described in a Gothic text running along the upper edge of the shelf that has been carved in relief. The text is thus only visible when the doors are opened, which probably happened on certain feast days. This inscription refers to the relics of St Victor and a certain "Saint Salbina", probably a misspelling of either St Albina, St Balbina, or St Sabina – all of them early Roman martyrs. When the doors remain closed, the aumbry displays no visual indication of having any link to saints or their relics. Instead, four carved coats of arms may be seen on the balustrades decorating the external side of the doors. The coats of arms stand for the twelfth-century Bishop Absalon, who founded the church, the sixteenth-century Bishop of Roskilde, Lage Urne, and the parents of the Abbot of Sorø, Henrik Tornekrans.[379] These family symbols indicate that Tornekrans was the commissioner of the aumbry; he also invested on the interior of the church, promoted the cult of its relics and probably even brought the relics of the two martyrs from Rome.[380]

Nidaros Cathedral in Norway apparently had a reliquary cupboard made around the year 1200; the cupboard almost survived to the present day, but it was eventually transferred to the Archepiscopal Palace, where it perished in a fire that destroyed the palace in 1983. This free-standing cupboard stood about two metres tall and wide,

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[379] DK: Sorø, 66; 75. The text is as follows: "We, Victor of the invincible companions and virgin Salbina, are enclosed in this tomb. Release your prayers to God." (*Victor ab invictis sociis Salbinaque virgo. Claudimur hoc loculo. Solvite vota Deo.*) 'Victor' could mean 'winner' here, but the reference to Saint Victor is rendered more plausible by the fact that another relic of St Victor was found inside the altar *sepulchrum* in Sorø Church, inscribed with the year 1526. Images of the aumbry can be seen at http://www.cils.dk/relikvieskab---cils-79 (cited 11.1.2017).

[380] *Acta Pontificum Danica* VI, 200–201; DK: Sorø, 54; 64; 68.

with a top like a church roof and four doors at the front – two large and two small. The function of the cupboard is not certain, as it was not studied before its destruction, but if it was not an aumbry for reliquaries, then it may have been a book closet,[381] or sacramental cupboard[382] – the most common type of storage in medieval churches. The aumbry of abbot Tornekrans shows that an aumbry for reliquaries does not necessarily have to bear visible exterior signs of its function. Art historian Margrete Syrstad Andås argues that the making of a reliquary cupboard could have coincided with the integration of the relics from an earlier reliquary chapel into the cathedral.[383]

In British churches, large aumbries were built for storing relics near altars or large shrines, but they usually did not have any iconography to enhance the effect of their contents.[384] In thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy, however, it seems there were expensive and lavishly decorated reliquary cupboards with complex visual cycles. These were placed in sacristies though, to protect them, and to restrict the occasions when laypeople could see them.[385] In the North, the same concerns must have also been present, but the opening and closing of the altarpieces or aumbries, in any case, was also controlled by the clergy.

### 3.2 Tabula

Nordic sources mention that relics were also inserted in tablets or panels (*tabulae*) of various sizes, although they were not used exclusively as reliquaries. The largest tablets seem to have been altar frontals in the style of the Golden Altars, which consisted of gilt copper plates with relief images reminiscent of Nordic gilt reliquary caskets and early full-body reliquaries such as the Shrines of St Canute and St Benedict in Odense. The plates could even be transferred from a reliquary to cover an altar, as happened in the

[381] Blindheim 1988, 16; 18.
[382] See Kroesen – Tångeberg 2013, *passim*.
[383] Andås 2004, 181, note 8.
[384] St John Hope 1907, 411–422.
[385] On reliquary cupboards in Italy, see Elston, 2011.

Tamdrup church.[386] Golden altars did not necessarily contain relics, but some of them did.[387] In Broddetorp Church, Sweden, a visible reference to relics featured on a frontal of the Golden Altar type from the 1170s: it was inscribed with a list of all the saints whose relics were kept in the church – Clemens Marcellus, Botulf, Sebastian, and even some from the 11,000 Virgins.[388]

The largest tablet reliquaries, possibly similar to the Golden Altars, are mentioned in Norwegian medieval sources: in his will written at the latest in 1319, King Haakon V referred to a silver frontal with relics in St Mary's Church in Oslo; he ordered a similar one to be made for the Church of the Apostles in Bergen.[389] The Latin terms used for the objects are *tabula pro reliquiis* and *tabula reliquiarum* – or reliquary tablets in English. It is unclear whether the Bergen donation, though in a will, was actually put directly into practice, but the silver frontal was still in St Mary's Church in Oslo in 1529, and in the register of church treasures in 1523–24, where its material composition, contents and size are described – a silver-coated board, 3 metres long, 60 cm wide, and containing relics.[390] The commissioner of the tablet in Oslo is not known, but my interpretation is that the king referred to that particular tablet in his will because it was important and familiar for him – as an object he had commissioned.

Haakon V's reliquary tablets were large enough to cover an altar. More frequently in medieval documents, however, *tabula* or *taffla* are smaller items meant to stand on top of the altar. This could be a

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[386] Sigurd Grieg claims moreover that they have been produced in the same workshop, probably located in Bergen. Grieg 1973, 19–20; Grinder-Hansen 2002, 22–31; Fett 1911, 3.

[387] Grieg 1973, 19.

[388] Now in the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm: SHM 4764.

[389] *Legamus eciam ecclesie duodecim Apostolorum Bergis, capelle regie lxxta marchas puri argenti, ad tabulam pro reliquiis faciendam, ad modum tabule reliquiarum, que in ecclesia beate Marie virginis in Osloya, et pro duabus manibus faciendis, ad reliquias in eisdem reponendas, et duos textus argenteos cum reliquiis in eisdem existentibus, quos in capella nostra habere consuevimus*. DN 4:128.

[390] *eth bordh beslageth meth sølffwer v alne langth och en alne bredt och beseth cum reliquiie*, DN 8:528. Grieg argues that this was an altar frontal; see Grieg 1973, 19. See also Kielland 1927, 152–153; Johnsen 1965, 154–155; Liepe 2015a, 86–87. –Liepe does not comment on the possibility of king Haakon Magnusson being the commissioner of the table in Oslo. Kielland and Johnsen, instead, state it as a given.

simple plate or a folding diptych or triptych made of valuable metal, ivory, or wood, and displaying images or text. In Braun's examples, some of them have a stand.[391] Various golden and silver tablets were donated to churches during the Middle Ages and confiscated during the Reformation; they often contained relics, it seems, but not all of them, according to the confiscation records.[392] In most cases, these tablets were donated by rulers. Queen Margaret of Denmark, for instance, donated a gilt *tabula*, maybe a relief, with relics in 1377 to the Abbey Church of Ås in Halland;[393] while Vadstena Abbey received a reliquary tablet from Queen Philippa in around 1422 – apparently it was given up to King Karl Knutsson of Sweden in 1454 but finally returned to Vadstena in 1478, as instructed by the king in his will of 1470. With each transfer, the tablets were briefly described in terms that seem to support the historian Gottfrid Carlsson's theory that the items meant in each document were one and the same object. In 1454, the description was "a golden tablet with two relics";[394] in the 1470 will, "a large gilt silver reliquary tablet with glass on the outside";[395] and in 1478 it was "a golden tablet full of relics".[396] The glass, only mentioned by Karl Knutsson, naturally meant the relics were visible.

In the will of a cathedral dean (Anders) from 1306, an illustrated reliquary *tabula* was bequeathed to Lund Cathedral. The dean intended for it to be used in "feasts of the highest degree" (*summis festis*).[397] The Latin description of the object and its function is slightly

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[391] Pugin 1846, 225; Braun 1940, 43–47; 262–276.

[392] See e.g. af Ugglas 1935, 25.

[393] […] *unam tabulam auratam cum reliquiis in eadem inclusis* […], Diplomatarium Danicum 4:1, 284.

[394] DV 228.

[395] "*vår stora förgylta sölftafla, som helgadoma äre uti och glas står före*", Diplomatarium Fennicum, 3419; Hist. tidskr. 1943, 25.

[396] *tabula de auro, in qua posite sunt due partes reliquiarum sanctorum,* DV 641–642; *ena Gulltafla alla fullalagda med hälgadoma,* SDHK 30357–30358; Gejrot 1988, 228. The taking of the reliquary is defended in Carlsson 1956, 106, footnote 27. For Carlsson, this donation means returning the reliquary once taken from the abbey. See also Liepe 2015a, 87.

[397] SRD III, 532; *Lunde domkirkes gavebøger*, 169–170. A photograph of the original manuscript can be seen on the website for Lund University's library: http://www6.ub.lu.se/fsi/server?source=Laurentius/Mh_7/Mh_7-f_71_r.tif&profile=mats_stor&type=image (accessed 3.9.2017).

ambiguous, however,[398] as art historian Göran Axel-Nilsson points out. The tablet was illustrated (*depicta*) in some way – according to Axel-Nilsson, the images might have been sculptures or reliefs, but I would say the term rather indicates a painted image, possibly even enameled. However, the last part of the description presents the biggest interpretive challenge. In Axel-Nilsson's view, "*pro reliquiis*" can mean "in front of the relics" or "instead of relics". He thus pictures a tablet with images of saints, placed near the relics of those saints or shown instead of them during festivities.[399] But "*pro reliquiis*" is also quite a common expression in medieval documents meaning "for the purpose of keeping/storing relics". Thus I would argue it can be translated simply as "a reliquary tablet". Finally, what about the last word, "*apponend-*"? In the original manuscript, it ends with an abbreviation, so that the last two letters that should be after the 'd' are substituted with a hyphen. While the word is transcribed as "*apponendum*" in the 1849 publication of the source, Axel-Nilsson transcribes it as "*apponendam*", as transcribed in the source publication of 1774. These two options lead to two different interpretations of the reliquary tablet. In Axel-Nilsson's version, where the verb is feminine, it implies the tablet should be placed in a visible place, perhaps on an altar. On the other hand, if the verb is read as *apponendum*, it could instead refer to the relics that were placed inside the tablet, indicating that it perhaps had niches or shelves within for displaying relics during high feasts.

The fact that the constituent materials of the *tabula* are not specified in the Lund document may imply that they were not valuable, and that it was made of wood. Indeed, there was one other such wooden tablet (*tabula lignea*) with relics in the Franciscan Church in Roskilde, which makes this more likely.[400] It may also have been illustrated in bas-relief or painted, like the one in Lund.

Some of the portable relic tablets, *tabulum reliquiarum* or *relik-taffla*, appearing in Nordic wills, inventories and confiscation lists, may have been in private use – King Karl Knutsson referred to his golden tablet

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[398] *unam tabulam depictam pro reliquiis in summis festis apponend-*

[399] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 36.

[400] SRD VIII, 272–273; 304. A quite different connotation for *tabula lignea* in a Cistercian context is presented in Kinder 2002, 133.

as his own. Michael Camille describes one such private reliquary tablet dating from the fourteenth-century from Cologne: it had a painted panel with folding side panels similar to those of a large altarpiece, and rows of small niches for relics. It was a small item produced for private contemplation, and commissioned and owned by a nun.[401] Clearly, it was an object of luxury, comparable to an illuminated book and accessible only to the privileged, but it is not impossible to imagine such a precious item in a Nordic context, in an abbey, castle, or wealthy household. In those surroundings, some of those tablets may even have been small enough to be worn as pendants. Archbishop Jacob Ulfsson of Uppsala, for instance, wrote in his will about his "daily" reliquary that was a golden tablet on a gold chain.[402]

Reliquary tablets displaying an inscription were simply called "texts" (*textus*).[403] King Haakon V donated two such "silver texts with relics", to the Church of the Apostles in Bergen.[404] "Texts" mentioned in this context, in fact, could also have been copies of the gospel with silver covers and – in this case – relics within.[405] In the same will, King Haakon donated a similar item to St Mary's Church in Oslo, described more explicitly as a small *missale* with relics inside that was for the king's daily use in his "portable chapel". The writer of the *missale* was identified – he was a Dominican monk called Brother Hiallm – but the character of the relics or the material characteristics of the artefact were not stipulated.[406]

### 3.3 Pax

The term *tabula* was also used for the "*osculatorium*" or "*pax tecum*" in Nordic inventory and confiscation lists. The *osculatorium* – also known

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[401] Camille 1996, 124.

[402] Monumenta Ullerakerensia, 170 (*til sin Successor, sit dagliga Helgadoma kar som war en gulltafla med gullkedia*).

[403] Braun 1940, 47.

[404] *duos textus argenteos cum reliquiis in eisdem existentibus, quos in capella nostra habere consuevimus*. DN 4:128.

[405] See e.g. Pugin 1846, 226–229. They are also interpreted as books in Kielland 1927, 153.

[406] *cum parvo missali, in quo reliquie sunt reposite, quod frater Hiallm ordinis Predicatorum manu propria conscripsit*; DN 4:128.

as the "kissing tablet" or "pax tablet" – would be passed round in church during the *pax vobiscum* greeting. These tablets are typically round or rectangular, flat objects with a foot or handle below and illustrations, often in relief, on both sides. Images of the Crucifixion and of the Virgin Mary are common on paxes. The instructions for the *pax tecum* greeting in a Norwegian fourteenth-century document indicate that people should give the kiss of peace to each other, not a tablet, but there may have been local variations. Also these tablet-shaped *osculatoria* or paxes sometimes had relics inside.[407]

Although they are mentioned in Nordic medieval documents, very few *osculatoria* remain. One wooden *osculatorium* has survived in the Norwegian church of Hedal – it is a flat rectangular tablet with ornamental reliefs and a cavity for relics in the middle. The handle is sculpted in the shape of a hand.[408] A pax made of walrus tooth and ornamented with carved reliefs of the Crucifixion was found in Lönsås Church, Sweden, but without a space for relics.[409] It has also been suggested that crosses were used as *osculatoria*,[410] and in fact this may well be true about an altar and processional cross from Lempäälä with the text "*pax vobiscum*" (see chapter 5.1).

One possible pax tablet (see image 22) has survived in Jurmo Chapel in the Finnish archipelago. This wooden object was not previously identified as a pax: it is a two-sided object with a peaked, Gothic tower shape on top and small handle below. Under the peaked "roof" and framed by an arch, each of the two sides has a different relief image: the Throne of Grace group (Christ crucified, held by his enthroned and crowned Father) on one side; and the crowned Virgin Mary with child on the other. Above the images is a circular cavity, which extends through the object, so visible from both sides. The cavity is larger on the Throne side and seems to have once been

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[407] Källström 1939, 134; Braun 1940, 69–70. Hildebrand (Hildebrand 1898, 507) refers to a source from 1460 that mentions a "reliquary for carrying the pax", but does not specify the source.

[408] The Norwegian terms are *kysseplate* and *pax-tavle*. Fett 1909, 141–142.

[409] Gustavson & Skoglund Ohlsén & Tegnér 1999, 169–177.

[410] Gustavson & Skoglund Ohlsén & Tegnér 1999, 173. Their suggestion concerns a cross from Östra Ryd, but they do not present arguments as to why it would have been used as a pax. Unlike in the Lempäälä cross, there is no such direct reference to the pax ritual in the Östra Ryd cross.

covered by a lid. The object has been estimated as a late-medieval piece originating from the local area, but its specific original location is not known. The original polychromy has been covered with light blue paint on the background and with white on the figures.

The Jurmo object has briefly drawn the attention of the art historian Sigrid Nikula – who defined it unambiguously as a reliquary; and C.A. Nordman – who thought it was "somewhat monstrance-like". More recently, Elina Räsänen has suggested that the circular space may have had a transparent lid on the Throne of Grace side which allowed the relic to be seen, while the relic may not have been visible at all from the side of the Virgin.[411] The cavity above the images may indeed have contained a relic and been covered by a crystal or glass lens or lid, but it may also have been a mere decoration, a crystal with no relic behind it. Be this as it may, the space is so small that "monstrance" can hardly be the correct term here. Instead, I suggest that the Jurmo object once functioned as a pax tablet in medieval services, either in Jurmo or in some other church on the Finnish coast. This interpretation is supported by the size and shape of the object as well as its iconography. It was perhaps not primarily perceived as a reliquary, but it may have contained relics that were visible through the small opening and thus enhanced its status and increased its sacred power.

As opposed to the gilt tablets and silver gospels, the pax was not only for the elite's eyes. The congregation would have had access to closely viewing both the relics and relief images as the pax was passed round from hand to hand.

### 3.4 Wearable Reliquaries

Reliquaries owned privately are usually small and transportable items such as pendants, or less commonly rings, bracelets, and brooches. Although most reliquaries were portable to the extent they could be

[411] FHA, Nordman's folder: 8.8.1952 Jurmo (in Swedish "monstransliknande"); Nikula 1973, 74–75; Räsänen 2009, 64; 126–127. Recent radiocarbon tests have dated the item to roughly the 14th century (see the blog text by Visa Immonen, http://hiiskuttua.utu.fi/2018/11/jurmon-kappelin-relikvaario-puuesine-paljastaa-salansa/?fbclid=IwAR3I7sRFiCG0lcyvJvzA73-Clclu1rGsfp-aRntZViZg87VwExxpRbuJjyU. Cited 8.11.2018).

carried in processions, these personally worn items were far more portable – they could be carried around everywhere in constant contact with the owner's body, for healing and protection.[412] Only some of them can be described as tablets, but I will briefly discuss the other wearable reliquaries here as well. Cross or crucifix pendants will not be discussed, however, until chapter 5.

Reliquary pendants can roughly be divided into two groups, and extant examples of both can be found in Nordic museums: (i) simple amulet-like pilgrimage souvenirs with secondary relics such as holy oil or water in an ampulla; and (ii) more elaborate, jewellery-like pendants worn by rulers, bishops, or wealthy laypeople. These are often either round or rectangular, flat objects with illustration or decorative ornamentation on both sides.

The oldest pendants from the Early Christian period are small bottles or ampullae filled with holy oil or water from around the tomb of a saint.[413] Those little vessels filled with *virtus* are the early combinations of souvenir and relic. Their later medieval parallels were metallic pilgrimage signs with small contact relics (*brandea*).[414] These are reliquaries that are barely recorded in written documents, so their history has to be composed from the few remaining objects and fragments of them that remain. Amulet bottles for sacred oil or other liquid relics are preserved in Nordic museums. Some were kept inside the *sepulchrum* or in other larger reliquaries.[415] Källström interprets the ampullae found in confiscation lists as small containers for communion wine and water.[416] However, as they are known for their usage as reliquaries as well, this function cannot be excluded from the interpretation of the confiscated items. Twelfth- or thirteenth-century ampullae from Thomas Becket's Shrine in Canterbury were found in Lödöse and Bergen. With a little space for the blessed liquid and with images of St Thomas' martyrium and

[412] Cherry 1994, 16–31; Robinson 2010, 111–116.
[413] Hahn 1997b, 1086; Hahn 1990, 85–96.
[414] Blick 2014, 110–115.
[415] Tegnér 1997, 401; Edgren 1997, 408.
[416] Källström 1939, 105.

miracles, they are reliquaries and pilgrim souvenirs that must have helped spread the fame of this famous shrine.[417]

The more expensive and decorative types of reliquary pendants are documented in medieval wills and inventories. Pendants can be recognised there from two clues: the mention of a chain or of being carried round the neck. In medieval wills, the owners refer to their personal contact with the pendants. King Karl Knutsson wrote of the "reliquary we daily keep round our neck"; while Archbishop Jacob Ulfsson also referred to his own "daily" reliquary tablet with a "chain".[418] In Turku, the Cathedral might even have had an excess of reliquary pendants, as one was used as payment in part of a land trade agreement.[419] Nevertheless, "chain" may not indicate a pendant in all cases. As we have seen in the contexts of caskets, bursas and pyxes, even larger reliquaries were sometimes suspended by chains in church. Thus more details, such as the size or shape, are needed to confirm that the reliquary was wearable. In the case of a triangular reliquary with a golden chain belonging to Strängnäs Cathedral,[420] the shape does not reveal the size; a triangular shape is quite unusual in reliquaries – it could have perhaps been something like a bursa with a triangular side profile.

There is very little information on the relics kept in such pendants in the Nordic countries, and nearly all the remaining pendants were found empty. Also medieval written documents mentioning reliquary pendants seldom refer to their contents. Some of the existing pendants have images or text that can be interpreted as possible references to the original contents, but even those cannot be taken for granted, as it seems the pendants were sometimes sold or given empty, and their contents may have been changed by their owners.

Perhaps the most famous of the preserved reliquary pendants in Sweden is the rectangular tablet of gilt copper with an engraved

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417 Rydbeck 1964, 236–248; Larsen 2012, 28–37; Spencer 1998, 38–39.

418 DF 3419; Monumenta Ullerakerensia, 170 (*til sin Successor, sit dagliga Helgadoma kar som war en gulltafla med gullkedia*).

419 REA 655 (20.5.1477); see also the following documents of the same land sale, in which the reliquary is omitted but the chain mentioned: REA 656 (20.5.1477) and 658 (22.5.1477). The case will be discussed in more detail below in Part III.

420 Källström 1939, 261.

image of St Birgitta on its cover. The partly damaged text next to the image reads: "of the table of St Birgitta […] of the kingdom of Sweden" (*de mensa S. Birgitte --e de regno schwecie*). The missing word specifying St Birgitta's status is probably 'widow' (*vidue*), which is often used in texts referring to her. The spelling 'schwecie' seems to point towards German-speaking areas, and maybe due to this, it has been interpreted as a German piece made in around 1500. This might indicate a connection with the Birgittine convent of Altomünster in Bavaria. The design is simple and functional: the leaf-ends of the short sides are bent inwards, and they would have held the relic in its place. The item now belongs to the Swedish History Museum, but its provenance is unknown and thus it may in fact have arrived in Sweden only after the medieval period.[421]

Other known Swedish reliquary pendants have been interpreted as such by the Swedish History Museum. None of them have relics in them or explicit references to relics, but they do have a space suitable for small relics. Like the St Birgitta pendant, they are illustrated with religious images that potentially refer to their former contents: they are illustrated with the Adoration, Veronica, the Calvary scene, or images of saints. One of them, from Edåsa, of which only fragments exist, has been interpreted as an *agnus dei* (its engraved pattern seems to consist of a folded ribbon with stars and the initials *ihs* and *inr*).[422] The only reliquary pendant with a recognised Nordic theme is a round pendant from Bø in Telemark, in which St Olaf is depicted riding a dragon.[423] A round Byzantine-style silver pendant found in East Finland also has an image of a human and an animal, but it is rather unclear and could be St George, either on horseback or with the dragon.[424]

Rosaries could also contain relics, and at least one rosary with a reliquary is preserved in the Danish National Museum. This fifteenth-century rosary of ivory beads is attached to a flat, rectangular gilt silver reliquary, illustrated with a mother-of-pearl image of St

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[421] Andersson & Franzen 1975, 41–44; Tegnér 1997d, 248; 409–410.

[422] SHM 3017; 2007; 16897; 9008; 729. An image of the pendant in Hildebrand 1903, 644. For the Banseröd pendant, see af Ugglas 1933, 38. A different *Maria orans* pendant was found in Finnish Karelia; see Meškauskaitė 2015.

[423] Oslo Museum of Cultural History, C8348.

[424] Svanberg & Qvarnström 1993, 208.

Catherine of Alexandria, and it probably once contained a relic of her. Despite this unambiguous iconographic attribution, the object is known as "St Olaf's Rosary" even though the object could not have belonged to him, since it dates from after his lifetime. It could also have contained a relic of St Olaf, but that cannot be confirmed. The association with St Olaf may simply be based on the rosary being registered as formerly being property of Nidaros Cathedral, where the cult of St Olaf was based.[425]

In Roskilde, Countess Ingrid af Regenstein bequeathed a silver apple (*pomum argenteum*) to the cathedral in 1257. The object may well have been an apple-shaped reliquary,[426] although it was not registered as such in her will, or it may have been a personally worn pomander – a receptacle (often apple-shaped) that could contain small relics or more worldly things like perfume.

Other wearable and "private" reliquaries are rings and brooches. Reliquary rings were almost exclusively worn by bishops – they were not only their instruments of private devotion, but also a sign of their high status. In Nordic documents, reliquary rings are rare. A "golden ring" (*fingergull*) with a relic of Christ's blood apparently existed in Nidaros Cathedral, purchased by Archbishop Eystein in 1165. The reliquary may have previously belonged to a royal owner.[427] In 1391, Archbishop Petrus of Lund is recorded as possessing two reliquary rings, one of which contained relics of the True Cross.[428] No mentions of reliquary brooches have been found in Nordic medieval sources, but an elaborate, golden, partly enamelled brooch reliquary with a relief image of St Michael and the Dragon (see image 23) was found in the ground in Skillinge, Sweden.[429]

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[425] Liebgott 1981, 91.

[426] DK, Roskilde 1640.

[427] On the royal family and the context of the acquisition, see Andås 2004, 190–191; *The Nidaros Office of the Holy Blood*, 2004.

[428] *unum annulum aureum, in quo de ligno sancte crucis reliquie sunt reposite, ita tamen quod non alienetur, sed perpetuis temporibus cum reliquiis observetur; unum annulum aureum cum saphiro, quem reponi volumus cum reliquiis, positum tangibiliter Rome supra veronicam Domini*. Erslev 1901, 157.

[429] SHM 7741; see also af Ugglas 1933, 38.

Altarpieces or aumbries built for the storage and display of relics were expressive liturgical instruments that could reveal their precious contents on specific feast days; examples of those have survived in Løgum Abbey, Övre Ullerud and Sorø. It is uncertain whether the wooden reliquary tablets mentioned in written documents were actually such altarpieces, but royal donations to Nordic churches also included gold or silver reliquary tablets as large as three metres. Relics were even inserted in silver covers of liturgical books. None of those noble metal objects have survived.

If aumbries and reliquary tablets were admired from afar by the congregation, and liturgical books with relics inserted in their silver covers touched only by clergy or royals, smaller instruments for the veneration of saints – such as the extant wooden pax tablets and privately worn reliquary pendants – are examples of objects through which even laypeople could be in a closer contact with the *virtus* of relics.

## 4 – Monstrances and Other Ambiguous Objects

What the objects discussed in the following pages have in common is not their shape, but their conceptual ambiguity – their names have been used and interpreted in various ways. Many of the terms have been used both of reliquaries and other objects, and the same terms have been used for reliquaries of varying forms. The reliquaries discussed first – monstrances or ostensories – are primarily meant as instruments of display, while pyxes or ciboria are primarily portable containers. In both cases, their design is subservient to their function. Generally, they resemble containers for the host, for which the same names are employed, but the same terms have been used for reliquaries with shapes as varied as crosses, and body-parts. The other ambiguous terms – *reliquarium*, *vas*, *kar*, *capsa*, *theca* and *cistula* – give even less away as to the shape or constituent materials of the objects.

Many of these common terms for reliquaries are rather vague, even if specific definitions for them exist, and in most cases the terms have become mixed up and used to describe very different objects both during and after the Middle Ages. Some contemporary authors have

attempted to make exclusive divisions for the terms and their meanings,[430] but medieval written sources clearly testify that they were used unsystematically and in many different ways. Indeed, sometimes the objects themselves may have been used for more than one purpose.

In confiscation lists, among the most common terms are "monstrance", "ciborium" and "pyx (*pyxis*)". At least these words coexist in the same list, which would seem to indicate that the confiscator or scribe was able to distinguish between the different objects. However, when only written documents and no actual objects are available, we cannot really be sure of how individual scribes differentiated each of these terms.

Conceptual ambiguity prevails even in contemporary museums. Employees cataloguing a collection seem, more often than not, to have relied on whatever literature was at hand. Thus, an object may be defined as a ciborium in an exhibition text, a pyx in a book, and a monstrance in the archives. The same range can be found in illustrated reliquary catalogues from the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, where similar footed fourteenth-century reliquaries in the form of a church tower with a crystal in the middle have been called *turricula, ciborium, monstrans, pyxis crystallina, monstrantiola*, and *ostensorium*.[431]

### 4.1 Monstrance

According to Braun, the term *monstrantia* has appeared in inventory lists only since the 14th century, and even then, only in German-language areas – the word remains unknown in Southern Europe. The term has been used to refer to objects in the shapes of churches, boats, sea-shells, crosses, hands, and also as a synonym for a pyx. The word denotes the function of displaying (*monstrare*) rather than the shape, hence the variety. Braun further emphasises that the object on display may not always be a relic, but the reliquary itself – a masterpiece produced so as to impress an audience.[432] The most recognisable feature in a monstrance is usually the transparent "window" allowing

[430] See e.g. Tegnér 1997a, 136–137.
[431] Bock 1867, 20–22.
[432] Braun 1940, 55–57.

the relics to be seen. When a medieval reliquary list refers to a transparent element in a reliquary, often called the "crystal" (*cristallo*), this would seem to indicate that the object in question was a monstrance.

After the Middle Ages, the word *ostensorium* became more common for both monstrances for relics and those for the host; this convention stemmed from a word also meaning the act of showing or displaying – *ostentio*.[433] I have not encountered any example of the term *ostensorium* being used in Nordic medieval documents, but *ostentio* or *ostensio* as the practice or act of displaying reliquaries does appear – for instance, in the fifteenth-century document *Ordo in ostensione sanctarum reliquiarum* from Lund Cathedral. In this, as in other Nordic documents, the reliquaries with the ostensory function are registered as "*monstrancia*".[434] Despite the lack of medieval references, the term *ostensorium* has been found useful in later research; Visa Immonen uses the term when discussing medieval ecclesiastic artefacts to better distinguish between those receptacles intended for relics and those intended for the host. In his terminology, monstrances are for the host, while ostensories are for relics.[435] When dealing with comparisons between various extant objects for which the original names remain unknown, the term may indeed be accurate and useful. In the present thesis, however, the focus lies more on the written sources and their medieval vocabulary, which is why I will not be using the term *ostensorium*.

The development of monstrances is linked with the visibility of relics (and the host). When crystal windows started to appear on reliquaries, they became monstrances. The first known monstrance reliquaries are from the second half of the 12th century. Cynthia Hahn has suggested that the new, open reliquaries (and ambulatories for pilgrims) were a reaction to the previous closed crypts and tombs, where viewing was restricted and controlled by the clergy.[436] The papal decree forbidding the display of relics outside reliquaries (*reliquiae amodo extra capsam non ostendatur*, from the 62nd decree of the

[433] Braun 1940, 60.
[434] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89–91; 98.
[435] Immonen 2009, 163–165.
[436] Hahn 1997, 1079–1106, particularly p. 1105–1106.

Fourth Lateran Council in 1215) may reflect an increasing importance attached to the displaying and viewing of relics. Monstrances and other transparent or easily opened reliquaries seem to have been a viable technical solution and a *via media* between papal prohibition and the popular wish to see more. A vividly discussed question concerns the extent to which the 62nd decree propelled the design and production of this new type of transparent casket that allowed a relic both to be visible and yet protected within the "capsa".[437]

Being able to see the relic had a remarkable impact on the cult, gradually changing the relation between the viewer and the viewed, no doubt making it more personal and emotionally charged.[438] In a monstrance with a transparent container, the relics actually become one of its visual elements, which makes the viewing experience rather different from that of a reliquary in which the presence and appearance of a relic must be perceived by imagination. The contrast between the fragments of a dead body and the skilfully crafted metal details of the reliquary is striking. The message of the mortal humanity, physical fragility and suffering of the saints is conveyed with utter explicity. If the container is transparent enough and the relic bare instead of wrapped in cloth, in some cases the particular part of body may be recognised and the symbolic or personal meanings associated to it are added to the interpretation. The sight of such a relic, framed by a reliquary and accompanied as it always was with iconographic and liturgical content, must have had a tremendous effect on its viewers – shaking and, as Gertsman writes, *bothering* them[439].

This new visual access not only enabled a previously forbidden sensory experience of relics, but was a substitute for a more immediate tactile access, such as the Communion. In one of St Birgitta's revelations, Christ explicitly commands that his body – the Host – must be kept in a casket of sapphire or crystal standing on the altar in order to be beheld. This way, if some of the abbey's members would be at the risk of dying without being able to receive the last

[437] Herrmann-Mascard 1975, 348–349; on the discussion, see Diedrichs 2001, 10–14. See also Dierkens 1997, 248.
[438] See Diedrichs 2001, *passim*, particularly p. 9; Toussaint 2005, 89–106.
[439] Gertsman 2018, 27–42.

Holy Communion, the Host could still be shown to them through the transparent casket, thus allowing them to "eat with their eyes" and receive the blessing of Christ through his corporeal presence.[440]

The monstrance is the most recent of the ecclesiastic vessels, but by the 16th century it had become the most common item in the Nordic churches. According to the remaining confiscation lists from Sweden (including the Finnish area), Källström estimated that there were altogether about 460 monstrances in the country. Most Swedish churches lost a monstrance made of gilt silver or copper in the Reformation.[441] Källström believed most of the monstrances in Sweden to have been receptacles of the Host made in a Gothic style, "of that buttress-, pinnacle- and tracery-adorned type that was a direct translation of the altarpiece architecture to the art of the goldsmith."[442] However, the confiscation documents seldom describe the function in any explicit terms. The function might have changed too – host monstrances becoming reliquaries and vice versa.[443]

Confiscation documents allow us to get an idea of the various forms they came in. Many monstrances are described by one or two details only, but the contents are hardly ever specified. Transparency is implied when glass is explicitly mentioned, but the exact structure can only be a speculation. A monstrance "with two glasses", for instance, may have had two windows for two different relics, one for a relic and one for the Host (as Källström suggests),[444] or perhaps two separate glass or crystal cylinders connected to the same foot.[445] Another monstrance mentioned by Källström had "wood below in the foot", which according to him may have meant a wooden relic inserted in the foot of a monstrance designed for the Host.[446] A hollow or even transparent space for relics in the foot would have been possible, but uncommon. An equally plausible interpretation, in my

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[440] Heliga Birgitta, *Uppenbarelser*, Bifogade, Chapter 37.
[441] Källström 1939, 109–111.
[442] Källström 1939, 109–111.
[443] Van Os 2000, 30; Snoek 1995, 207.
[444] Steffen 1933, 46; Källström 1939, 286; 312.
[445] For a fourteenth-century example of the latter, see Hahnloser 1971, 169–170; tavola CLXI.
[446] Källström 1939, 111; 208.

view, would be that the monstrance simply had a foot made of wood. Entirely wooden monstrances have not been found, unless a damaged Gothic vessel from Naantali Abbey Church, reminiscent of the upper part of a tabernacle, was once a reliquary monstrance, as certain earlier researchers have suggested.[447]

Inventories of confiscated objects register some monstrances as having characteristic details such as a "spire" or other parts like a "house", "tongue" or two small bells attached. Colours, materials and images are mentioned, too, such as enamelling, coats of arms, or partial gilding. Damage is sometimes also documented – "a pillar has been lost during Bishop Mårten's time".[448] Such details are illustrative of the variety among these objects, but also of the individual confiscators' perception of the items. Although some visual and material details are registered, their functions are not. Coats-of-arms were the sign of wealthy donors, and two coats of arms on the foot of a monstrance probably marked a joint donation from two families or a wife and husband. The bells moved whenever the monstrance was lifted or carried around, and their chimes announced the presence of relics or the Host. The "tongue", if that is what was meant by *Lunula*, is one of the few unambiguous indications of a monstrance's function as a container for the Host, rather than relics.

In a few cases, the reliquary function is explicit. A reliquary monstrance plays a role in one of the miracles of Katarina of Vadstena, but as what it was made out of and its shape were not essential to the 'miraculous' nature of the story, these were not described – the monstrance (reported as having six relics in it) was stolen from the church of Arnäs, but when the local parishioners prayed to Katarina in their distress, they soon found "everything wrapped together" in a forest.[449]

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[447] Cornell 1918, 268; Nordman 1980, 95–96; Lilius & Nikula & Riska 1972, 61; Immonen 2009, 164.

[448] Steffen 1933, 46; Källström 1939, 322; 314–316; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89. For an existing monstrance with small bells, see object 10028:1 in the Swedish History Museum's collection, http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=43096 (cited 6.2.2017).

[449] Lundén 1950, 163–164.

Some references to monstrances deal more with something monstrance-like. A "reliquary made like a monstrance" was registered in Bergen, for instance, that may have been a non-figurative object with a transparent crystal container, or a reliquary of a certain shape that revealed its contents through a window. However, when "like a monstrance" was used to describe ostrich egg reliquaries in a fifteenth-century list from Lund Cathedral,[450] it could hardly have been referring to their transparency. In this case it was more likely that they were referring to their impressiveness and shape.

As mentioned above, some monstrances are described in terms that seem to imply a body-part shape. Roskilde Cathedral had a reliquary of St Mary Magdalene's hand that was in some sources called "the monstrance in which Magdalene's hand was", but also simply "Mary Magdalene's hand" or "reliquary of Magdalene's hand".[451] As the arm shape in this case seems plausible, I shall return to it in more detail in Chapter 7. The same goes for a large monstrance of St Henrik, confiscated from Turku Cathedral in 1557: it is the only monstrance which confiscation documents associate with the name of a saint, which is why it has been interpreted as a reliquary. I discuss its possible shape and history in the light of other documents in Chapter 7 too. The St Henrik monstrance weighed around five kilos,[452] but it was not the largest in the area – central Swedish cathedrals were wealthier than Turku, as we may infer from their respective treasure lists. In Linköping, a monstrance of 6.5 kg was confiscated, while in Uppsala, the cathedral is known to have possessed a monstrance of over 10 kg, made of gold and crystal, with a golden figure of St Mary, and topped with a large sapphire.[453].

The two following sections are also dedicated to specific types of reliquary monstrances: first objects named by their main substance,

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[450] *ith reliquiarium saa giortt som ith monstrandz forgylt*, DN 13:569; "*quod modo est monstrancium*", Axel-Nilsson 1989, 99.

[451] "*Magdalenae hendes Monstrands*", "*thet Monstrans Magdalenae hand stod uti*", DK, Roskilde, 1640.

[452] 12.5.1557: *Ett Sancti Henrici förgylt monstrans wog - 25 löd 9 ½ lott*. Sölvkammaren 1557-62.

[453] Andersson 1982, 93; Källström 1939, 212; 277.

*cristallo*, and then monstrances containing relics of the Crown of Thorns and held by angel figures.

**Cristallo**

Although constituent materials are often considered more important than other details in reliquary lists, they are seldom mentioned as the only characteristic. Certain materials, however, do also serve as the name of the reliquary. These are either natural objects recognisable by their shape – such as ostrich eggs and coconuts; or materials remarkable for their transparence – such as rock crystal (*cristallo*) or the more tinted beryl (*berillo*).[454] Usually these translucent rocks are fitted within a metal structure and listed in medieval documents as either *cristallo* or monstrances. The difference was probably in the size and shape of the crystal: a *cristallo* would have relics inserted inside a hollow crystal, while in monstrances, the crystal could be a container or flat window. Crystal was worth mentioning in the documents not only because of its transparency, but because of the multiple religious meanings attached to it, and its capacity to magnify the objects seen through it.[455]

Due to its water-like clarity, crystal is associated with the purity of the Virgin Mary. It also amplified the effect of candlelight and brought light to the reliquary, cross, book cover, or bishop's staff it adorned. After the 13th century, crystal's function shifted from being decorative to window-like, allowing pilgrims to at least believe they had eye contact with a holy relic – as crystal was not as transparent as glass. According to Hahn, crystal was used to "stage" the presence of relics.[456]

In medieval Nordic documents, the other term for transparent material – "beryl" – features in at least two cases from medieval Denmark. In 1376, on behalf of her young son Prince Olaf, Queen Margaret donated a monstrance containing relics to Lund Cathedral that featured a large beryl among other gems fitted with gold.[457] When

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[454] SRD VIII, 451, 454, 456; Källström 1939, 152, 277; Braun 1940, 100–104.

[455] Gerevini 2014, 92–99.

[456] Lindahl 1976, 83–104; Hahn 2012, 232–233.

[457] "*…monstranciam de magno berillo et aliis preciosis lapidibus ac auro compositam (---) cum reliquiis in ipsa repositis*", DD IV:1, 124.

the same object turns up a century later, in the reliquary list of the cathedral, the foot and mounting for the beryl are reported to be made of pure gold.[458] Since the beryl was large and described as the main feature of the monstrance, it was probably a translucent container for the relics. The same should be assumed of the reliquary simply named "*berillo*" in the list of the Franciscan Abbey at Roskilde.[459]

A crystal monstrance also seems to have been one of Lund Cathedral's last reliquary acquisitions at the beginning of the 16th century. In a document concerning a new divine service, Archbishop Birger Gundersen ordered that relics be placed in a reliquary (*Clenodie*) with a large crystal, decorated with topaz, mother-of-pearl, and other precious stones. This implies that the reliquary was new and probably commissioned by him. Axel-Nilsson suggests it may have been the reliquary named "*cristallo*" (with about forty different relics inside) in the *Ordo in ostensione* cathedral list.[460] However, the reliquary is listed simply as *cristallo*, followed by a list of its contents. The only indication of a possible connection to the reliquary of Bishop Birger would be the large size of the crystal – a deduction based on the large number of relics listed with it. There is also another smaller reliquary listed as *cristallo*, and monstrances and pyxes with crystal, but gems are not mentioned in any of the descriptions. The monstrances described in Lund Cathedral's list have few details, but just enough for most of them to be recognised: one was adorned with three towers in gilt silver; while another had a Calvary group, consisting of the figures of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and St John the Evangelist. The relics were unrelated to the image.[461]

Two of the Lund monstrances are easier to picture than the others as, from the descriptions, they are comparable in shape to an existing monstrance from Västerås Cathedral – a small crystal cylinder with four gilt silver feet. One of them is described as having the text "*Maria*

[458] "*…monstrancia de berillo cuius pes & circumducture sunt de puro auro…*", Axel-Nilsson 1989, 105.
[459] SRD VIII, 270.
[460] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 86; 106.
[461] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 90–91;

*Ihesus*" on top; while the other "a gilt tower-shaped part on top".[462] A surviving crystal reliquary in Västerås Cathedral (see image 24) corresponds almost exactly to the latter description: the core of this fourteenth-century monstrance is a horizontally placed, cylindrical Bohemian crystal; mounted in a gilt copper architectural composition containing both animal and church-like elements.[463] The structure stands on a rectangular base with animal feet at the corners; while the crystal itself is supported by animal feet, but on its "back" are church-like Gothic arches and three narrow towers at each end. The object is unique in the North, but bears a resemblance to simpler, Rhenish cylindrical crystal reliquaries from circa 1200. Reliquaries with a space for the relic inside the crystal, instead of just being seen through a lens-like crystal window, became possible with the development of crystal treatment techniques in the late 12th century.[464] This means that the Lund monstrances could also have been older than the gothic Västerås piece.

Two other hypotheses have been proposed for the provenance of the cylindrical, four-footed monstrance in Västerås. Olle Källström speculates that it might have originally been a reliquary for the lower jawbone of St Katarina of Vadstena, that was sold to Västerås Cathedral during a time of economic difficulties for Vadstena Abbey.[465] However, apart from the materials common to nearly all monstrances, I find there are not many reasons to support his hypothesis. In the two documents concerning St Katarina's translation, the reliquary for her jawbone was indeed described as a crystal monstrance. In the account by Nils Ragvaldsson, the object is called *crystal* and made with gold and silver. In *Diarium Vadstenense*, it is simply defined as a crystal receptacle, *vas cristallinum*.[466] In 1540, according to the account book of the abbey, the reliquary was sold,

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[462] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 92; 100: "*In cristallo paruo oblongo habente pedem deauratum & tecturam desuper ad modum turrium deauratam et vnum os de sancto Laurencio.*" The singular form "foot" in the Lund document could be understood as referring to the entire stand, although it could also be described as having several "feet".

[463] Ekström 1976, 45.

[464] Bagnoli 2011b, 175–176; Baumgarten 1985 (3), 145–147.

[465] Källström 1939, 117.

[466] Den stora kyrkofesten, 46–47, "*...i een crystal och tillreddan medh gull och silff...*"; DV 884: 14. "*Deinde faucem, seu mentum, in secundum vas cristallinum collocans (---)*".

and its later destiny is unknown.[467] However, the substance sold is only registered as "silver from St Katarina's jaw", and it is expressed as two separate quantities of silver; if the object was sold complete, then the value of the crystal ought to be included as well. Also, considering the size and shape of the Västerås monstrance, it is unlikely that the entire lower jaw could have comfortably fitted in it.

A second suggestion by Källström and his colleagues Bengt Thordeman and Monica Rydbeck was that the Västerås reliquary might be the pyx financed by Bishop Israel Erlandsson in the early 14th century.[468] Here, too, the support is scarce; both objects are reliquaries and associated with Västerås Cathedral but, apart from that, nothing else connects them.

In one large gilt silver monstrance from Lund Cathedral, the crystal not only contained several relics, but also a painted image.[469] For both the image and the relics to be visible, they could not have been on top of each other, but then how were they arranged? One answer might lie in looking at a large rock crystal in the Danish National Museum with no surviving metal parts, but containing both a relic and two pieces of parchment with painted images[470]. The item was not part of the Nordic medieval relic cult, since it was brought from the Cologne area after the Reformation, but it is worth mentioning as an illustration of how this large monstrance in Lund may have looked. The crystal is not entirely hollow, but has a cross-shaped cavity in the middle. The parchments – with two fourteenth-century miniatures portraying Christ, with apostles, saints, and prophets – are cut to the shape and size of the cavity and when placed to face outwards, are

[467] Silfverstolpe (red.) 1895, 13–15. See also Källström 1939, 280–284; Andersson 1983, 94.

[468] SDHK 2807; Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 24.

[469] *In magna monstrancia cristalina circumsepta argento deaurato intra quam est pictura ymaginum (...)*, Axel-Nilsson 1989, 91.

[470] The crystal (approx.17 x 17.2 cm) is possibly hundred years or more older than the miniatures. It was bought by King Frederick III into the royal collection in 1654 as a part of Museum Wormianum, the collection of MD Ole Worm. According to tradition, a Swedish officer had donated it to Worm in 1634, having brought it as a trophy from the Thirty Years' War.

visible from either side. A relic of the Cross was also placed in the same cavity.[471]

A fifteenth-century monstrance with an oval, transparent crystal container was also among the objects preserved from the so-called Linköping hoard. Unfortunately, the crystal part of this reliquary broke into pieces at the moment of its discovery, and the relics were probably lost at the same time. The footed, nearly half-metre-high structure is of gilt silver and possibly made in Sweden. The crystal would have been flanked on two sides by Gothic buttresses supported by volutes and decorated with small reliefs of lions. On top of the structure is a crown, and on the crown the Virgin and Child with an St Anne on a vault under a towered roof supported by slim pillars. This roof is topped by a cross, and on the reverse side of the cross the Virgin Mary is depicted.[472] Perhaps due to the lack of a *lunula*, the object has been identified as a reliquary even though no relics were actually found with the monstrance. Historian Åke Nisbeth suggests the monstrance may be the object mentioned in a letter written in 1515, when a monstrance donated to the abbey of the Order of St John in Kronobäck, was transferred to Linköping Cathedral by the heirs of the original donor (Lady Ingegärd Körningsdotter). They felt it would be safer from both the impending Reformation and robbers. The monstrance is not described in the letter, but the heirs saw it fit for honouring God, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, St Anne, and St Nikolaus of Linköping.[473] The only saint present in both the existing monstrance and the letter, however, is St Anne. Indeed the only links between the description and surviving monstrance are her, and the connection with Linköping. Stylistically, the monstrance would coincide with Kronobäck's donation in the early 16th century, but the exact date of Lady Ingegärd's death is unknown. The letter does not refer to relics or even specify the monstrance as a vessel for relics; however, if the monstrance in the letter really is the same, the saints mentioned could be taken as clues to the relics contained in it.

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[471] Horskjær 1969, 60; Schepelern 1971, 158–159; Christiansen 1972, 34; Plathe 1987, 171–196; Gundestrup 1995, 181. A crystal reliquary of the same type exists in the Orthodox museum of Jerusalem.

[472] Nisbeth 2001, 78–81.

[473] Nisbeth 2001, 81; Källström 2011, 116–117.

Glass was used in monstrances, too, and glass items are mentioned in Danish reliquary lists from the 15th century. At least two of them sound just like regular host monstrances: an oblong piece of glass with a cross on top, and a gilt glass pyx with two bells and a cross on top. A wooden pyx known as a "glass vessel" (*vas vitreum*) must have been less typical; one can only assume that it had a large compartment or pane of glass for relics. Relics were also kept in a glass amphora, and two glass ampullae are described as containing "the oil of blessed Nicholas".[474]

**Thorns Held by Angels**

A series of French figural silver and crystal reliquaries, containing relics of the Crown of Thorns, were brought to the North in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. None of them survive, but their medieval descriptions indicate a familiar reliquary type still seen in European and North American museum collections – one or two silver angels holding a crystal container with relics.[475] As observed by Cynthia Hahn, the theme of two angels is associated with the golden cherubim of the Ark – flanking the Mercy Seat as described in Exodus 25. Indeed, as containers of the divine, reliquaries were seen as medieval equivalents of the Ark.[476]

The famous Crown of Thorns, kept at Sainte Chapelle in Paris, was one of the most wanted relics in Medieval Europe. Its owners – the descendants of Saint Louis, who had acquired the relic and built Sainte-Chapelle especially for it – did not keep it all to themselves. According to medieval documents, they used parts of the coveted treasure to improve their relations with other monarchs.

The first French reliquary gift from King Philip III, the son of St Louis, arrived in the Norwegian Royal Court in 1274. Archbishop Jon of Nidaros brought a reliquary – in the form of a silver angel bearing a crystal containing a fragment of the Crown of Thorns – to the Norwegian King Magnus Lagabote,[477] It is not known whether King

[474] SRD VIII, 260–261; 265–266; 279; 304.

[475] See e.g. van Os 2000, 34; on the iconographic theme, see also Kühne 2000, 868.

[476] Hahn 2012, 238–242.

[477] Storm (ed.) 1880, 161–162; Johnsen 1965, 153; Johnsen 1968, 221–223. For more on relic donations between Nordic rulers, see Liepe 2015a, 75–100.

Magnus had asked for the relic, but a remaining document shows that he was active in purchasing relics. In 1279, he requested and received some relics from King Edward of England.[478] Donating the thorn relic in a precious reliquary is a strong indication of friendship or alliance between the two kings. The thorn relic was initially placed in the Bergen Cathedral, but following the example of Sainte Chapelle, King Magnus soon initiated the building of a new Church of the Apostles to which the relic was then transferred.[479] Pope Nicholas IV expressed his appreciation of the king's investments by granting indulgences of a year and 40 days for all those who visited the thorn relic and other venerable relics, now housed in the new church, during festivities of the Holy Cross.[480]

The new French king, Philip IV, seems to have been as generous as his father, as in 1304 he sent another reliquary as a gift to King Haakon V (son of King Magnus IV). It consisted of a thorn relic set in a bejewelled golden crown held by two gilt silver angels on a pedestal. The gift also included a fragment of the finger of St Louis in a silver reliquary statuette of St Louis. Two French documents related to the commissioning of these reliquaries have since been discovered by the historian Arne Odd Johnsen revealing the name of the maker of these reliquaries to be a French goldsmith named Thiebaut. King Haakon placed these treasures for safekeeping in the Church of Our Lady in Oslo.[481]

Surprisingly, still during the same year 1304, King Haakon apparently donated a thorn relic to Bishop Brynolf in Skara in a reliquary that sounds quite familiar – a crystal container supported by two angels.[482] It seems likely that the relic was from one of the two thorn relics in the possession of the Norwegian monarchy, but the

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[478] DN 19:298; See also Magnus's letter of thanks, DN 19:302, "*(-) et precipue reverendissimis sacrosanctis reliquiis, omni thesauro incomparabilibus (--)*"

[479] Liepe 2015a, 81.

[480] DN 17:17, "*(--) ad capellam quam carissimus in Christo filius noster . . Rex Norwegie illustris in civitate Bergensi ad honorem sancte crucis construere incepit, et in qua quandam partem corone spinee redemptoris et domini nostri Iesu Christi, et quasdam alias uenerabiles reliquias quas Rex ipse habere dinoscitur desiderat collocari, (--)*"

[481] *Jtem ii angeli som standhe oppo en fodh och ere forgylthe tenentes partem spinee corone dominj, oc weffwe eth bismer pund mere och icke mynne.* DN 8:528; Johnsen 1965, 151–156.

[482] Lundén 1983, 74–75.

origin of the reliquary is not known. It seems obvious that he did not give up the reliquary he had placed in the church of Our Lady in Oslo, as documents prove that it was still in the church in 1524.[483] Instead, it is possible that the king commissioned a copy of the French reliquaries. Thor Kielland has argued that local goldsmiths would have been perfectly capable of creating similar objects, having the French model at hand.[484]

In 1288, according to a Swedish *officium* for the Feast of the Crown of Thorns, Philip IV sent a similar present to King Magnus III (Ladulås) of Sweden – a reliquary with an angel statuette and a thorn relic. As Lena Liepe has observed, the officium as such is not sufficient proof of the gift being made, particularly as it is a copy of the Skara officium.[485] However, an angel reliquary with a thorn did exist in the Royal Chapel of Stockholm Castle, until Magnus III's son and successor Birger Magnusson deposited it in Uppsala Cathedral in 1311.[486] It is not described as including a crystal, but considering the other reliquaries described in the medieval sources, it is likely that this was of the same type. Later, it is mentioned once more in the will of Magnus III's grandson, King Magnus Eriksson, in 1346, this time described as a crystal reliquary with gems and including other relics of Christ in addition to the thorn.[487] Its description as angel-shaped in one document and crystalline in another only implies the same reliquary if the documents are read with the particular reliquary-type in mind; the angel and crystal can be seen as two aspects of the same French reliquary, confirming its similarity to the ones sent to Norway. Hypothetically, King Magnus Eriksson might even have had access to

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[483] DN VIII: 528.

[484] Kielland 1927, 150–151, 163. –Kielland presented this hypothesis concerning the reliquary in the St Mary's church in Oslo, as he was not aware of the second French donation.

[485] Ekre 2004, 51; Liepe 2015a, 79–80.

[486] *angelum cum spina de Corona domini*. SDHK 2435. Not all reliquaries with angels included crystal, however; for an Icelandic drawing of a reliquary with two angels holding a non-transparent container, see e.g. Kielland 1927, fig. 139. Kielland suggests this might have been the reliquary in Oslo.

[487] *et kar af kristallo med dyrom stenom i. hwilicu kari ær spinea corona. oc andre helghu doma af varom herra*. SDHK 5307. Birgitta Fritz argues for this continuity between the reliquary of 1288 and the one in Magnus Eriksson's will; see Fritz 1992, 118.

a new thorn reliquary, considering that his spouse, Queen Blanche, was related to the French Royal Family and could thus have acquired a relic and reliquary of her own in the same style as the others mentioned above.

Several other thorn relics in different reliquaries existed in Nordic churches, but their backgrounds are not known. One of these in Lund cathedral was, it seems, a monstrance. It was a gilt crown "surrounded by thorns", in other words a royal crown with shapes imitating thorns.[488] It may also have been a royal gift, considering the symbolic value of the crown for rulers.[489] No crystal or angels are mentioned in its description, but considering the brief style of the reliquary lists, one should perhaps not automatically dismiss the possibility of their existence. Their presence in the artefact's construction would have made it similar to the reliquary Haakon V received from Philip IV. In any case, the Lund relic was probably also visible within a transparent container, or between two flat crystal windows, framed by the circular crown.

### 4.2 Pyx

Pyx is a term with as many, if not more, interpretations and uses as the monstrance. Another term often associated with similar objects is "ciborium". Both have been associated with the eucharist as well as with relics.[490] Unlike monstrance and ostensorium, ciborium and pyx are not primarily vessels made for the display of their contents, but this display function is not excluded. For reasons of clarity, I do not use 'ciborium' to denote reliquaries, but before abandoning the term completely, it merits a brief discussion.

As a term, ciborium evokes the Eucharist, to which it has been etymologically associated, "cibo-" being the Latin for food (*cibus*). The term has, nevertheless, been used in the context of reliquaries too.[491]

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[488] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 90.

[489] Liepe 2015a, 84; Liepe observes the frequency of royal donors in thorn relics, but does not make the assumption about the Lund crown.

[490] Källström 1939, 320: Rauma: ciborium (pyxis), "*ett vitt öffletskar*", 322: Sjundeå: "*item fått ett öfflettekar*".

[491] Braun 1932, 283; Braun 1940, 59–60; Immonen 2007a, 76–90. Ciborium is also known in the early Middle Ages as the name for an architectural element, a canopy over the high altar; see Braun 1924, 189–261.

Although a functional distinction remains ambiguous, their scholarly use has been established: 'pyx' is used for mostly small round containers without legs or feet, while ciboria are footed, and often also round containers with a node in the stem of the foot. Ciboria have been further divided to two sub-groups – flat-bottomed and spherical.[492] In Nordic medieval sources, the ambiguity between the two terms is also less present: pyx (*pixide*) appears very frequently, while ciborium appears mostly in sixteenth-century confiscation documents and contemporary texts. In the reliquary list of Lund Cathedral, some pyxes are registered as having four feet.[493] However, in the thirteenth-century will of the Swedish King Magnus, the two concepts are used perhaps to denote one item inside another – "a silver pyx for preserving the holy Eucharist in a ciborium".[494]

In Nordic museum collections, objects defined as ciboria or pyxes are so similar that their functions are hardly recognisable from the outside. In the Swedish History Museum, there are several six-sided, tower-like 'ciboria', one of which differs from the others by its text. While the others, probably made for the Eucharist, have inscriptions referring to the Virgin Mary or Christ, this one says "a depository of relics" (*sacrarium reliquiarum*).[495] This kind of inscription may often be the only indication of the reliquary function, as the same iconographical motifs – saints, biblical figures, and symbols – are recurrent in eucharistic vessels, secular objects,[496] and reliquaries.

For the thirteenth-century canonist William Durandus, the pyx was a container for the host, but symbolically connected to the saints: "the pyx, being placed on the altar, which is Christ, signifieth apostles and martyrs".[497] In Joseph Braun's definition, *pyxis* originally meant a container for the host and from the 11th century, it also meant a reliquary, but by the late 15th century the term slowly went out of use. The first pyxes, in classical Greek vocabulary, were small round containers of cosmetics, made of boxwood; in medieval use, according

[492] Immonen 2009, 159.
[493] See e.g. SRD VIII, 449–451.
[494] *pixidem argenteam pro sacra ewcharistia in cyborio conseruanda*, SDHK 1302.
[495] SHM 1699; Hildebrand 1903, 643.
[496] On recurrent themes in different vessels, see e.g. Immonen 2011, 203–206.
[497] Guilielmus Durandus 2007, 52.

to Braun, the word often referred to a round box with a flat, cambered, or conical lid.[498] Most Nordic medieval sources do not reveal how pyxes looked, but in some – e.g. the fifteenth-century inventory of Lund cathedral – certain pyxes are described as round[499] – which could be taken to imply that roundness was not an "automatic" characteristic of a pyx. General inventories and confiscation lists include pyxes made of copper, silver, or ivory, that are gilt or enamelled, that are with and without feet, and ones decorated with a cross on the lid.[500] Most of those lists omit the function of the pyxes, and thus they cannot be counted as certain examples of reliquaries, and the same applies to other kinds of documents. Uppsala Cathedral, for instance, received four pyxes as a deposit from King Birger Magnusson in 1311. Their function is not mentioned, but their size and constituent materials illustrate the variety: two of them were made of ivory, one of silver, and the fourth one was a small oblong (or cylindrical) crystal pyx.[501] In an indulgence letter from the Oslo diocese in 1452, the pyx is mentioned as an instrument of the blessing;[502] therefore, it probably contains the host, although blessings could be given with reliquaries too.

There are plenty of documents mentioning pyxes that have explicitly reliquary or eucharistic functions. In Denmark, Countess Ingerd bequeathed a eucharistic pyx in her will of 1257 to the Franciscan abbey of Roskilde.[503] Pyxes for relics were donated to several abbeys and churches, for instance, one was financed by Bishop

[498] Braun 1940, 47–48; see also Immonen 2007a, 77.

[499] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 92–95.

[500] Källström 1939, 103; 316–321. *Lemw Kyrcke Clenodier 1554: Pixis, itt st:e een Crucifix är på lookett*; for a preserved pyx with many of the listed characteristics, see SHM Object number 20161, http://mis.historiska.se/mis/sok/fid.asp?fid=117292 (cited 6.2.2017)

[501] Braun 1940, 48; *pixidem paruulam longam de cristallo. pixidem argenteam, pixidem eburneam. et aliam pixidem eburneam maiorem*, SDHK 2435.

[502] *qui flexis genibus dum dicitur salue regina terna vice angelicam salutacionem aue Maria pro regis statu felici et pace tranquilla deuote dixerint et qui se humiliter jnclinauerint cum datur benediccio cum pixide,* DN 1:820.

[503] *Diplomatarium Danicum* 2. række. vol. I no. 240: *Item eisdem pixidem argenteum, in quo seruatur corpus dominicum.*

Israel for the Västerås Cathedral before the year 1317.[504] The reliquary lists of the Franciscan abbeys in Copenhagen and Roskilde are dominated by a majority of pyxes. Most of them are not described at all apart from their contents. Occasionally, the material is mentioned: wood, ivory, silver, gilt silver, or copper. Other details are size – "large" (*magna*); name – "glass vessel" (*quae dicitur 'vas vitreum'*), although glass was probably just a part of it, as the rest of the pyx was actually made of wood; and colour – "red" (*rubea*). Two pyxes had two spaces each, with the relics in the lower and upper part listed separately.[505] The multitude of pyxes made from different materials, and their sheer number in comparison to other reliquaries in the two abbeys, might imply that the list-maker was not familiar with all the other terms used for different kinds of reliquary. Other reliquary-types listed are mainly caskets, crosses, "nuts", and simply "reliquaries".

Lund Cathedral received a rib of its patron, St Lawrence, inside a crystal pyx from Archbishop Andreas Sunesen in 1228. Two centuries later, when the fifteenth-century *Ordo in ostensione* was composed, the cathedral had ten reliquary pyxes. Two of them were footed: the foot of the larger, partly gilt example was decorated with four sculpted lilies; while the other was round, made of crystal, with a lid and feet of gilt silver. The latter could almost be Andreas Sunesen's pyx, but the contents were entirely different, as inside were various other relics, none of which related to St Lawrence.[506] Archbishop Andreas' pyx might instead be another reliquary in the Lund list – one of the small, four-footed crystal cylinders discussed above (in the section on crystals) also contained only one relic – a bone of St Lawrence. The fact that the venerable donor's name is not mentioned in the fifteenth-century list is surprising, but it seems to be the rule rather than an exception, as all the donors mentioned in the fifteenth-century Lund list are comtemporaneous. That the object would be called "pyx" in

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[504] *pro pixide relliquiarum dedimus XXVIII. Marchas. denar,* SDHK 2807; Ingrid Svantepolksdotter's donation to Vreta Abbey in 1321, SDHK 3075; Bishop Absalon's donation to Sorø Abbey, Diplomatarium Danicum I Række 4, Bind 1200–1210, 39.

[505] VIII, 269–292; Källström 1939, 184.

[506] *pixidem cristallinam, in qva pars coste gloriosi martyris Laurentii contine(n)tur*, SRD III, 524; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 34–35; 94.

one document and "crystal" in another is quite in keeping with the medieval use of reliquary terminology.

A common characteristic of the existing and lost objects here classified as pyxes is a wide variety of materials. Therefore the two following sections are dedicated to specific types of pyxes: ones made of organic *curiosa* substances and a group of pyxes made of wood with textile embroideries.

**Ivory, Ostrich Egg, Coconut, and Calabash**

Instead of crystal or metal, the container part in footed or suspended reliquaries could be made of exotica or objects of curiosity, such as coconuts, calabashes, ivory, or ostrich eggs. Examples can be found both in Nordic museums and medieval lists of reliquaries. The surviving examples of these, too, have mostly been catalogued in museums as ciboria or pyxes, but here they will be discussed as pyxes – with the exception of items that are made of these materials but have a different shape.

Of the various reliquary pyxes in Lund Cathedral, seven were made of ivory. They were displayed in descending order according to their sizes. The details vary as well: some had copper fittings, locks or feet; and one of the smaller pyxes had three silver chains attached to its lid, thus implying it could have been suspended for display.[507] One of those ivory pyxes, the only surviving object from the *Ordo* list, is now in the Lund University Historical Museum. In the *Ordo*, it is described as follows:

> Pyx with gilding both under and over it and with the Twelve Apostles carved around it, donated by Sir Aslak, Bishop of Bergen, [containing relics] from the grave of Our Lord, from the Virgin Sunniva, as well as a jaw bone and four teeth from one of the Selje martyrs, and the martyr and archbishop, Thomas of Canterbury.[508]

The octagonal pyx is carved out of one piece except for the bottom and the missing lid. In addition to the apostle images mentioned in

[507] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94–98.
[508] SRD VIII, 449.

the list, Christ, the Virgin Mary, John the Baptist and St Anthony are also depicted in the relief images. This means that the only connection between the iconography and contents of the pyx at that time were the relics and image of Christ, unless St Sunniva's companions, the martyrs of Selje, are considered apostles. The relics of St Sunniva had been transferred to Bergen, making it easy for Bishop Aslak Bolt to donate some to Lund in the pyx.[509] The origin of the pyx as well as the reasons for the donation are unknown – a reliquary pyx is mentioned in the inventory of the bishop's chapel in Bergen during Aslak Bolt's office in 1408 – but without any details, it would be impossible to establish its connection with the one in Lund.[510]

As seen above, ivory was frequently used in reliquaries – in most cases, the original shape of the tusk was not visible in the final products, but apparently two tusk-shaped reliquaries did exist in Lund and Copenhagen respectively, each containing a "hanging tooth".[511] Although this initially sounds like a tooth relic, it becomes clear they were more like decorations or even a relic containers in the shape of a tusk, when in one description the reliquary is described as an "ivory tooth" (*dente eburneo*). In Lund, this tusk apparently was suspended from the triumphal crucifix in the middle of the cathedral, below an ostric egg reliquary that was also suspended from the crucifix. The contents of the egg and the tusk were listed together,[512] thus making it sound as if a single reliquary had been constructed from those two elements. Tusks and horns were relatively common in European reliquaries and other ecclesiastic items, perhaps as a reference to biblical horns, and yet no others[513] are mentioned in the surviving Nordic documents. They were typically suspended, but sometimes also footed.[514]

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[509] Lund had already received relics of St Sunniva during the 12th century from the Bishop of Selje. Axel-Nilsson 1989, 95–96; see also Ödman 1997, 388–389.

[510] æin pixis cum reliquiis, DN 15:42.

[511] Liebgott 1982, 126; SRD VIII, 266, 454; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 103.

[512] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 98–103.

[513] In the 15th-century inventory of the church of Our Lady in Visby, a hanging hunting horn made out of whale tooth and a "unicorn's horn" are listed, but not specified as reliquaries. *Cronica Guthilandorum*, 204.

[514] Braun 1940, 249–254; Hahn 2012, 114–116.

Ostrich egg reliquaries were also either suspended with chains, like the one in Lund, or footed pyxes. They were rather common in the Nordic abbeys and cathedrals, although ostrich eggs were exotic items that could only be purchased abroad. Lund Cathedral, in fact, had three more egg reliquaries in the 15th century. Two were donations from the local canons Anders Madsen and Peder Hermansen, while one was from Lady Christina of Gladsax who also donated a sculptural reliquary of St Lawrence to the Cathedral. These reliquaries are described as being "made like monstrances", and more specifically, "an egg with two gilt nodes and four gilt surrounding structures". [515] This probably implied a knotted silver foot and decorative supporting arches. Their non-transparence contradicts the concept of *monstrare*, but rather than show their holy contents, they were perhaps intended to demonstrate the wonders of divine creation (*mirabilia*) on the one hand, and a moral example on the other. Just as the forgetful ostrich, in a medieval fable, is reminded of its hatching duties by a star, we humans are awakened by the Holy Spirit to our task of virtue and *bona opera*. The ostrich egg was also seen as a symbol of the immaculate birth of Christ. Durandus also thought curiosity objects – such as these ostrich eggs suspended in churches – helped draw people into the church.[516]

In Denmark, also the Franciscan Abbey in Roskilde had an "*Ovum strutionis*", as did Cathedrals in Lund and Viborg, and the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen.[517] In Sweden, the Franciscan Abbey of Eskilstuna and the Dominican Abbey of Lödöse each had an ostrich egg reliquary;[518] while In Finland, the Birgittine Naantali Abbey was recorded (in 1530) as having four "small reliquaries made of black ostrich eggs with silver parts".[519] The short note reveals that the eggs were painted black; while the silver parts were the foot and an opening for inserting the relics. The silver parts were confiscated in

[515] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 98–99.
[516] Guilielmus Durandus 2007, 59–60; Mariaux 2010, 221; van Os 2000, 117.
[517] SRD VIII, 272; Liebgott 1982, 119–120; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 103; Petersen 1888, 112.
[518] Af Ugglas 1935, 26; Källström 1939, 169; 218.
[519] DF 6533: *iiij små helgedoma kar met suarta strusegg beslagna met sölff.*

1554,[520] but the ostrich eggs were left behind, exotic and rare as they might have been – though they may have been broken in the process of removing the silver parts.

In a Danish reliquary described as "white egg with a pelican",[521] the egg is probably from an ostrich as well. The self-sacrificing pelican is a symbol of Christ, and one of the relics described inside the egg is a fragment of the place where the Cross was discovered. In their will of 1346, King Magnus Eriksson and Queen Blanche planned to bequeath to the Vadstena Abbey, among various other reliquaries, three reliquaries "formed like eggs of the vulture bird".[522] This may have been a reference to ostrich eggs, based on a misunderstanding of the exotic species – the expression also leaves open the question of whether the eggs were the actual material of the reliquaries or just models for their form. There are, in fact, examples of preserved reliquaries with spaces seemingly meant for such an egg, but the space is either empty or fitted with something else, like crystal or coconut.

A similar, oval shape is also typical of vessels made of coconut. The original function of the coconut pyxes that have been preserved is difficult to define, as they have been used both as reliquaries and containers for the host, and the function is not necessarily revealed by the details. In twentieth-century publications, they are defined as reliquaries by some authors, and as containers for the host by others. Källström, for instance, defined all Swedish coconut vessels as reliquaries, while Immonen has recently stated that none of the Finnish items with wood or coconut receptacles have any details relating them to relics, although similar items may have been used as reliquaries – as witnessed in several medieval documents.[523]

Danish fifteenth-century inventories include various reliquaries made of coconut or "black nut". The reliquaries are not listed as pyxes or caskets, but simply as *nux* or *nux nigra*, which probably refers to

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[520] Almqvist (ed.) 1906, 371: *oförgylt sölff, som hade sitt opå 4 heliedomekar*. See also Lahti 2006, 178–181.

[521] SRD VIII, 265.

[522] SDHK 5307.

[523] Källström 1939, 119, 293; Nordman 1980, 55–56; Pylkkänen 1976, cat. nr. 34–36; Immonen 2007a, 85; Immonen 2009, 157–163; SHM 4954.

painted or varnished coconut shells. The nut reliquaries seem to have as elaborate a metal structure as crystal monstrances. In Lund, a jaw of a holy virgin was kept in a "black nut with a silver tower and silver foot".[524] This description correlates with the preserved coconut vessels now often defined as ciboria. A coconut reliquary with the words AVE MARIA on the foot contained a large amount of relics, including three Marian relics.[525] In other Danish churches, black nut reliquaries were adorned with a St Francis figure and with crystals.[526] On the lid or on top of a black nut reliquary in the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen was an unusual illustration for a reliquary, "an image of death".[527] Although the skeletal *ymago mortis* was a popular theme in fifteenth-century art, its relation to the relics is ambiguous – in the sense that corporeal relics are also results of death, but they represent a victory over death.

A different, pear-shaped wooden container is found in some of the preserved pyxes. A curious example in the Swedish History Museum is a footed hanap or goblet with a small, church-shaped extension of silver attached to the side of the wooden container.[528] It has been classified in the museum as a possible reliquary, and in fact, it seems that hanap-type objects were really used as reliquaries. In the medieval reliquary list of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, there are three reliquaries labelled *cucumere* (cucumber). They were completely or partly gilt or complemented with gilt parts. One of them was called "*Nap*" – a hanap or drinking bowl in medieval Danish.

The word *cucumere* obviously cannot mean cucumber in this context, but according to Joseph Braun, it is derived from the word *cucuma*, which means a bowl.[529] This would also not disagree with the name "*nap*". Thelma Jexlev has instead argued that the intended Latin word was *cucumis*, which according to her can refer to a plant

[524] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 106.
[525] SRD VIII, 271.
[526] SRD VIII, 277; Liebgott 1982, 121–127.
[527] SRD VIII, 262; Jexlev 1976, 41.
[528] SHM 530.
[529] Braun 1940, 51–52. See a Norwegian object of the same genre in Kielland 1927, fig. 190.

indigenous to warmer climes – the calabash. No (other) explicit references to calabash reliquaries are found in medieval documents, but a footed ciborium or pyx with a receptacle made of this actually survives in the Danish National Museum; it is supported by a foot of gilt copper and topped by a conical tower, and the word "*haffnis*" (Latin name for Copenhagen) is painted on the calabash itself.[530] Jexlev has suggested that it may be identical with the "*cucumere*" vessel called "*Nap*".

Nuts, calabashes or ostrich eggs are not named in the confiscation documents. However, they might have been intended in the recurrent items described as silver with "shells" (*skaler*). [531] One sea-shell reliquary is also registered in Sweden as "a large mother-of-pearl in gilt silver".[532] A note from Ekebyborna poses another interpretation problem: the note says "shell" in singular form (*skall*) – prompting Källström to interpret it to mean head reliquary, as this is also the Swedish word for skull. Without other notes mentioning skulls, however, one cannot be certain, but associating the term with the "shells" in other Swedish churches seems more logical. *Skall* might also be an alternative spelling for *skål* (Danish and Norwegian: *skaal, skall*) or "bowl", which recurs in Nordic wills and lists of goods.[533]

Two extreme cases of *mirabilia* in the Franciscan lists should be mentioned here, although most likely they were not pyxes. Did the Franciscans possess an ostrich head reliquary (*testa strutionis)* in Copenhagen, and one in the form of a long black splinter from the eyelid of a whale (*astula de palpebra ceti longa & nigra*) in Roskilde?[534] The former, if not made from an ostrich skull, could be a mistake by the scribe, perhaps jumping from one line to another while copying a list that includes both *testa* relics and an *ovo strutionis* reliquary. As for the latter, *astula* is most likely a mistake in transcribing *cistula* (little

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[530] SRD VIII, 263; 268; Jexlev 1976, 43–44; Liebgott 1982, 130.

[531] Källström 1939, 308; 260; 248; 204; 166.

[532] Källström 1939, 261.

[533] See e.g. DN 3:433, 11:583, 13:635, 4:660, 2:668, 4:1099. In documents from the same period and area, *skaal* is also used as a modal auxiliary verb, translated approximately as "shall".

[534] SRD VIII, 290; 276. I have not had the opportunity to consult the original manuscript, but a careful reading of it would most likely render an explanation to both cases, which are probably based on mistakes in the transcription.

casket), which is a more common word in medieval ecclesiastical documents[535] – but the rest will remain unexplained.

**Embroidered Birgittine Pyxes**

Vadstena Abbey is known for its production of skilfully made, embroidered church textiles. Despite her doubts about precious metals and other luxury materials, St Birgitta valued handicrafts and embroidery and recommended textiles decorated with gold and pearls to be used in mass.[536] Four pyx-like reliquaries are included in the textile legacy of Vadstena, three apparently used there (but now in the collections of the Historical Museum in Stockholm) and one in the cathedral in Linköping. There might have been more reliquaries of the same type, but they no longer exist. In one Vadstena inventory from the year 1595, five "relic boxes with feet" are mentioned that could match the three extant ones.[537] It seems that three of them survived inside the Birgitta shrine during its long exile in Poland,[538] while one may have escaped the exile by ending up in Linköping.[539] The three pyxes found inside the Birgitta shrine have been estimated as early 16th-century pieces, while the fourth one found in Linköping is probably some decades older, from late 15th century.

The reliquaries are wooden, lidded boxes with feet. The box part is oval and covered with embroidered red silk or velvet. Similarly shaped objects could have been used to contain the host, but in these examples, the dimensions are larger than what would be required for that, and the embroidery confirms their reliquary function. Relics from five different skulls were found inside one box. Perhaps due to these relics, the oval shape has quite plausibly been interpreted as further proof that they were intended for skull relics;[540] yet there could be other reasons, such as it being a mere visual fancy of the maker or commissioner, or a design-attribute that would allow it to be placed on a narrow shelf where a round pyx would otherwise not fit.

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[535] See e.g. SRD VIII, 273; DN 12:188; DN 17:641.
[536] Estham 1991, 9–13.
[537] Silfverstolpe 1895, 154, "*Helgedoma-askar med fötter*".
[538] Lindblom 1963, 34–36; Estham 1991, 30–33.
[539] Lindqvist Sandgren 2018, 51–52.
[540] Andersson 1983, 94.

One of the Vadstena pyxes (see image 25c) has an embroidered text explicitly confirming its contents to be a skull, though. "This head is of a holy martyr, who was a companion of Saint Gereon the martyr" (*Istud capud est vnius sancti martiris qui fuit de cosociis Sancti Gereonis martiris*). And in the eighteenth century, it still indeed contained a skull with two other bones.[541] The surface of the reliquary is red embroidery, with grapes and other plant motifs in silver and gold, with smaller green and blue details and round paillettes; among the patterns is also a dove representing the Holy Spirit. Unlike the others, this pyx still has its lid – green, with metallic red foliage resembling a vine. The text on the upper rim of the box-part of the reliquary (usually covered by the lid) is written in green and blue with yellowish-white patterns between the words. The wooden foot is painted in red, green, and yellow.

The second Vadstena reliquary (see image 25b) does not specify the saint, but appeals (in red and blue embroidered text) directly to those saints present in the pyx: "Precious saints of God, whose relics are contained here, help us now and eternally" (*preciosi sancti dei quorum reliquie hic continentur succurrite nobis nunc et in eternum*). The outer surface of the object is completely embroidered, the background blueish green, and the patterns, resembling crowned coats of arms, couched in gold and silver with metal beads. The coats of arms are apparently ornamental and not referring to any existing family, although similarities with the emblem of the Bylow family, connected to the abbey through an abbess and several nuns, have been observed.[542] The foot is painted in red and green. In the eighteenth century, the pyx still contained some unidentified bones.[543] Curiously, both in this one and in the reliquary of one of St Gereon's companions, the text is embroidered around the upper rim of the container, so it could only be seen when the lid was taken off. Because it addresses the saints, this text could be seen as being meant

[541] Peringskiöld, quoted in Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 65–66; Andersson 1983, 99; Nockert 1997, 386–387. With the exception of Peringskiöld, in most of the previous literature, the word "*unius*" has been mistakenly transcribed as "*unnis*"; see e.g. Hildebrand 1903, 637.

[542] Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 65; 108.

[543] Andersson 1983, 99–100; SHM, object nr 349:2. See also Estham 1991, 30–31.

exclusively for their eyes, but another possible interpretation is that it was meant to be recited when opening the reliquary.

The third pyx-like Vadstena reliquary (see image 25a) is not embroidered, but covered with purple velvet and decorated in gilt silver beads creating a circularly curved vine ornament, and silver letters "*ia*" with a crown above them – even the foot is clad in velvet and decorated with small, round silver paillettes. The eighteenth-century historian Johan Peringskiöld has interpreted the letters to stand as initials for "*Jesus*, *Ave Maria"* or for the parents of Mary – Joachim and Anna.[544] The historians Aron Andersson and Inger Estham, however, see the "*ia*" to be an abbreviation for the name Maria.[545] As seen in several other reliquaries, the text or iconography of the reliquary does not always refer directly to its contents. When Peringskiöld saw the pyx, it still contained relics – three finger bones sewn with green silk thread onto a red silk base and covered with crocheted gold thread. Peringskiöld assumed they were relics of St Olaf, St Eric or – as tradition had it – St Henrik. In addition, there were three *authentica* without relics, written in medieval Swedish, attesting that the reliquary had once contained relics of Christ's clothing, of the Virgin Mary's milk and hair, and of St Anne's hair and bones. The *authentica* are now lost, but as the historians Bygdén, Gejvall and Hjortsjö have observed, those relics may in fact have been the ones acquired by St Birgitta herself and mentioned in her *vita*.[546]

The Linköping reliquary is the most colourfully decorated of the four. In addition to thread embroideries, its surface has been adorned with pearls, precious (or at least colourful) stones, and silver spangles in multiple forms – approximately 135 rectangular spangles and a smaller number of leaf- and flower-shaped ones. Gilded silver spangles were also hanging from the lower edge of the reliquary. Most of these decorations are lost, but some of them have been preserved separately. The remaining stitches and marks on the cloth show the form of the lost decorations and their location among the embroidered patterns. The embroidered pattern consists mainly of

[544] Quoted in Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 65.
[545] Andersson 1983, 100; Estham 1991, 33. For another case of misinterpreted initials in Birgittine embroidery, see Räsänen 2013b, 109–135.
[546] Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 65–66.

ornamented foliage embellishing the round container with lilies, other flowers, acorns, heart-shaped leaves, and grapes. The main colours are green, blue, and red. A page of an inventory of the Vadstena Abbey was found inside the bottom of the reliquary, used as upholstery. Based mainly on the dating of the inventory text and stylistic details, the reliquary is estimated as dating from the late fifteenth century.[547] It also seems that the textile was readjusted and possibly transferred to the pyx from a smaller object.[548] The main pattern – a vine making large, circular curves – is somewhat similar in shape and dimensions to the metal ornament in the third Vadstena pyx described above. Another feature those two pyxes have in common is the foot covered with textile.

Two different suggestions have been made as to the reliquary's original cult context. Inger Estham suggests that the reliquary was made for the translation of Bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping in 1515. Indeed, three liturgical textiles she also associates to the translation, decorated with similar silver details, have been preserved there. The same type of silver decorations are known from other European church textiles, but Estham suggests the Linköping ones could have been domestically produced. In Vadstena, such decorations remain on the surface of Katarina's (originally St Birgitta's) sarcophagus, but many of them have disappeared, particularly after the Reformation. "Paillettes" or "spangles" (*bricker*) also appears as a term in confiscation documents from Vadstena. Any remaining decorations were removed from the Linköping pyx and sold to be melted down in 1784. Ten silver-gilt spangles, probably from the reliquary, have survived in the cathedral.[549]

Nils Hermansson was a friend of St Birgitta, and an active advocate for Vadstena Abbey and Birgitta's canonisation;[550] thus it seems natural that the skills of the Vadstena nuns were put to use for his cult. However, it is also possible that the pyx was not made specifically for the relics of Bishop Nils; there is no image or text on it

[547] Nisbeth & Estham 2001, 124–131; Lindqvist Sandgren 2018, 49–51.
[548] Lindqvist Sandgren 2018, 47.
[549] Nisbeth & Estham 2001, 128–131; Källström 2011, 117–116; 146.
[550] Lundén 1963, 20.

referring to Nils Hermansson. He did not have a coat of arms,[551] but a visual reference to him such as a mitre, or the emblem of the diocese – two crossed keys and a crosier – could have occurred to the makers or commissioners in Vadstena as suitable. The iconography may contain biblical references – such as lilies associated with the Virgin Mary, and grapes to Christ – but there are no references to the blessed bishop Nils. This lack of explicit iconographic clues is characteristic of several preserved pyxes and monstrances made of metal, too, making them flexible in relation to their contents. Like all but one of the three Vadstena pyxes, the reliquary is decorated in a manner that does not directly associate it with any specific saint.

In a recent article, Eva Lindqvist Sandgren argues that the reliquary was used for the skull of Katarina of Vadstena for her translation in 1489 and possibly made even earlier, for the relics of St Birgitta. Sandgren bases her argument on stylistic analysis – stating that the reliquary is a fifteenth-century piece unlike the other remaining Vadstena pyxes – and an iconographic argument. The shape of a ring cross, similar to that of the Birgittine (or other) nun's crown, dominates the top of the lid. As Sandgren points out, it is not a symbol that would have been very likely on a reliquary of Nils Hermansson, while it would be suited to represent Katarina.[552] I am inclined to agree, particularly considering the lack of visual references to the bishop. If the old shrine of St Birgitta was repurposed for the translation of St Katarina, the same could have been true of a reliquary for her skull. I will touch upon this again in the chapter on head reliquaries. As for the nun's crown motif, below, in the chapter on silk skull reliquaries, I argue against the interpretation of it as an obvious reference to the Birgittines, but in the case of the Linköping pyx, the association is not far-fetched; on the contrary, it is confirmed by the Vadstena origin of the embroidery.

### 4.3 Bursa

The term "bursa" has been used to denote different types of reliquaries, but also other liturgical objects, for instance a textile-clad

[551] Cinthio & Cnattingius 1987, 289.
[552] Lindqvist Sandgren 2018, 40–54. See also Lindqvist Sandgren & Wahlberg 2018, 184–195.

box for storing the corporal (the communion cloth), and little bags for personal use,[553] but I only pay attention to those objects which are clearly recognisable as reliquaries.

When referring to reliquaries, bursa has two distinct meanings. It originally refers to small purses or pouches, used to keep personal everyday products. Some of these pouches have later become reliquaries, or similar ones have been made for relics. There are also reliquaries made of metal, wood, or bone, which have come to be called bursa because of their shape,[554] but rather than being soft and round like a cloth bursa, they are closer to church-shaped reliquaries with a quadrangular bottom and a steep "roof", which might explain why they have also been known as "architectural reliquaries". Unlike cloth bursas, however, these ones cannot usually be opened.

Bursa reliquaries preserved in the North were found in or near churches, and none are mentioned in wills or other documents connected to private people. They appear in Nordic inventory lists, sometimes independently, and sometimes as appendices to other reliquaries, but it is not always clear whether in the latter case their place was on the inside or outside of the reliquary. The way bursa reliquaries are mentioned in these documents implies that most were cloth pouches. Danish inventories mention some belonging to a pyx or four kept inside the same casket. Some bursas are very briefly described as long, green, golden, blue, or red.[555] Mentioning the colour is common in European documents, and golden or gold-coloured cloth is among the materials used for bursa reliqauries.[556] A 'golden' bursa could also be made of gilt metal.

Cloth bursas have been used for small relics exchanged, for instance, between churches or abbeys to enhance the prayer connection between them, or sometimes for anonymous relics. There

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[553] Braun 1940, 137–139; 198–205; Franzén 1998, 201–209; of the personal use, see e.g. SDHK 4362.

[554] See e.g. a tenth-century bursa reliquary of bone, gilt copper, and wood at the Metropolitan Museum in New York (http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/06/eust/ho_53.19.2.htm) and a thirteenth-century gilt copper bursa reliquary at the Walters Art Museum (http://art.thewalters.org/viewwoa.aspx?id=34489).

[555] "*bursa pixidis*", "*bursa longa*", "*bursa viridi*", "*bursa auro*"(sic), "*bursa glaucea & rubea*". SRD VIII, 301–304; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 95.

[556] Braun 1940, 138.

is not much information on how these relic bags were used and where they were kept; without a specific form or other indication of their content, the rather simple cloth bursa was not so much a visual contribution to the cult of relics, but a practical one. Instead of representative illustrations, most of them are only ornamentally decorated.[557] The metal ones carried a more complex visual message, as by imitating purses they rose to a metaphorical level. They are also more richly decorated than the cloth ones. All bursa reliquaries were made to be suspended, attached to another liturgical object or worn by the clergy. They have also been suspended on sculptures.[558] The sculpture stood for visual effect, while the meaning of bursa was understood through its place – giving the sculpture added authority and perhaps increasing its capacity to instigate miracles. It could also have been an alternative to inserting relics inside a sculpture, and comparable to the tradition of putting crowns and mantles on the sculptures of saints.

At least three small cloth relic purses or pouches from the Nordic medieval period still exist: one from Turku Cathedral, one from Uppsala Cathedral and another one from Vadstena Abbey. The Turku pouch, found in the so-called Hemming Shrine, is made of blue, red, and green linen, and seems to have contained a collection of small relics with *authentica*.[559] The Uppsala pouch in the shrine of St Erik is made of Italian silk brocade with gold patterns on a red background, and contains the cervical vertebra that, according to the legend, was broken by his murderer's sword.[560] The Vadstena pouch (see image 26) is made of brown-violet velvet seemingly similar to the material on one of the footed pyxes, decorated with gold ribbon and silver circles, and lined with red leather. It contains a collection of small objects, mainly relics wrapped in pieces of cloth with *authentica*, and a parchment leaf with a longer list of relics, both of internationally famous and biblical saints such as the Virgin Mary and local ones like Catherine of Vadstena.[561] As often happens, it is already difficult or

[557] Braun 1940, 137–139; 575; Laporte 1988, 116; 164.
[558] Belting 1994, 303; Hahn 2005, 243–244.
[559] Rinne 1932, 314–316.
[560] Estham 2010, 250.
[561] SHM 281.

impossible to tell which of the cloth fragments were originally wrappings and which were relics.

Three Nordic reliquaries can be identified as bursas of the sculpted, metal-and-wood type, but nothing is known about their cult usage or attribution to saints. They are among the oldest reliquary caskets preserved in the area, apparently pre-dating the arrival of Christianity. One of them was found in a Viking-age grave in Melhus; the discovery indicates that it was not used as a reliquary here, but purchased or stolen for other purposes. Two others were found in churches, but they also carry signs of previous Viking ownership: the owner's name, Rannvaig, was inscribed on one in runic script.[562] These represent the eighth-century Celtic, Irish or Scottish kind, made of wood covered with enamelled copper and decorated with the insular knotted spiral patterns. These metal bursas were previously interpreted as architectural shapes based on an image of the Temple of Jerusalem in the Book of Kells.[563] Although there is a formal resemblance, having a means for attachment or suspending makes them essentially bursa, not house-shaped caskets. Anton Legner associates them with the purses used by pilgrims and missionaries to carry relics on their travels.[564] Nevertheless, the allusion to the Temple may not be entirely wrong. Cynthia Hahn argues that the shape of such purse reliquaries has a metaphorical function, containing biblical references to the treasures of grace and to the apostolic community and the treasures of wisdom they carried and distributed on their mission.[565]

### 4.4 Reliquarium, Vas, and Kar

Only one of the terms used of reliquaries is unambiguous as to the object's function – *reliquarium*, and it has been used since the 14th century.[566] In medieval documents, some such objects lack any description, while others have a few details. In the Franciscan lists from Roskilde and Copenhagen, *reliquarium* is mentioned, along with

[562] Fett 1909, 45–48; Grinder-Hansen 2002, 11.
[563] Anderson 1910, 259–281.
[564] Legner 1995, 256.
[565] Hahn 2012, 103–109.
[566] Braun 1940, 17–19.

caskets, pyxes and bursa, as one of four reliquary types. The *reliquaria* are described with the same level of detail as the other three reliquary types. Their shape and constituent materials vary widely: many are possibly monstrances, others sculptural reliquaries. Plenty of body-part reliquaries can hide behind this term too. Some *reliquaria* are described only in material terms, such as "stone" or "silver inlaid with stone"; while others are described only in terms of shape, such as "round"; or their distinguishing features, such as images of saints.[567] Whether the above "stone" could also have been a reference to crystal or beryl is difficult to say. One reliquary is known simply as "Eye" (*Oculus*).[568] The word could perhaps refer to a round, lens-like crystal or glass window.

Also the word *reliquiis*, which can be translated as "relics", has previously been interpreted in some cases to mean "reliquaries". But the word is often misleading – often it means "relics", but it is also used for "the rest" or "remaining". Only a careful reading and understanding of the context reveals which of the meanings it could be.[569]

The Nordic closest equivalent of *reliquiarium* is *helgedomakar*, referring to the function but not the shape of the object. However, it is not quite as unambiguous as *reliquarium*. Consisting of the two elements, "*helgedoma*" and "*kar*", it is dependent on the meanings attributed to each of its parts. In Källström's view, *helgedomakar* has at least two meanings, depending on the writer and context. When listed directly after chalice and paten, he is inclined to interpret it as a eucharistic ciborium. In other cases, the description implies a reliquary.[570]

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[567] *reliquario lapideo*; *r. novo argenteo cum lapide oblongo*; *r. novo argenteo cum lapide rotundo*; *r. rotundo argenteo*; *r. rotundo deaurato*; *r. argenteo cum Ymagine Sancti Georgii*; *r. novo argenteo cum cruce superposita* & *Ymagine Beatae Mariae Magdalenae inferius*, SRD VIII, 276–281.

[568] SRD VIII, 276; see also SRD VIII, 266 and 279 for other reliquaries with "names".

[569] Such a misinterpretation of the word "reliquiis" has, as far as I can see, possibly taken place in the book *Danmarks kirker: Roskilde Domkirke*, on page 1640, where the confiscation note "*sedecim calices cum aliis cuibusdam argenteis reliquiis*" (sixteen chalices, with some silver ones remaining) was translated (into Danish) as "sixteen chalices as well as some relics/reliquaries of silver".

[570] Källström 1939, 102–103.

*Helgedoma* or *helgadoma*, which literally means "holy matter", appears in connection with items strongly reminiscent of reliquaries, but the Swedish reformer Laurentius Petri's understanding of the term makes it clear that it was not exclusively used for those. Distinguishing between forbidden and authorized liturgical objects, Laurentius explicitly excludes reliquaries but includes *helgedomakaar* in his list of utensils still worth using in the mass.[571] However, when *helgedom* is mentioned alone as an object to be donated in a will, it can hardly mean the Eucharist.[572] "*Kar*", on the other hand, means a receptacle or vessel. It appears both on its own and in compound words describing either the contents of the receptacle (such as relics, chrism, host or incense), or the material from which it is made (like gilt copper or silver).[573] This makes it very hard to judge their original function, although Källström notes that all the gilt copper *kar* are possible reliquaries.[574]

In rare cases, the terms appear in a more specific context: Stavanger cathedral in Norway had St Olaf's blood in a silver *kar* in 1517, but even then the shape remains unknown.[575] It thus seems that use of the word *kar* does not imply any particular type of reliquary. Various reliquaries had been purchased and reserved for the translation of St Katarina's relics in Vadstena, and the first one was a decorated *kar* for her skull, prepared for the occasion.[576] Again, the shape is not revealed and, because the reliquary no longer exists, it could just as easily been a head or bust as an enamelled casket or one of the embroidered pyxes.

In Västerås Cathedral, confiscators encountered as many as twelve gilt *helgedommakaar* with different "marble rings", if the note has been correctly interpreted.[577] The rings were probably related to a suspended form of display. In the inventory of Naantali, *helgedomakar*

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[571] Lindgren 1987, 89.

[572] Erslev 1901, 210.

[573] *"helgedomakar"*; *"Sölffkar, der Helligdom er udi"*; *"krisme/criszma kaar oförgylt"*; *"ölio kaar"*; *"öfflethe kar"*; *"kopar Sacrament kaar förgylt"*; *"rökelsekar"*; see e.g. Arwidsson VIII, 162–163; Strelow 1978 (1633), 201–205.

[574] Källström 1939, 318; 320 (Raisio, Uusikirkko).

[575] "*af sancte Olaff koninges blod i eynom sylffkare*", DN 4:1074.

[576] Den stora kyrkofesten, 46–47: "*ij ith væl prydt kar, ther foerra var redt till*".

[577] Källström 1939, 301.

appears alongside *helgedoma skrin* and *skrin*, indicating that some kind of differences were recognised even if they now seem vague.[578] In Oslo, *helligdoms kar* is a term that comes on the St Mary's Church inventory list after "bowls" (*skaller*) and before "monstrances" (*monstrantzer*), with no reference to relics.[579] In Växjö, confiscators found a white *helgedomma kar* shaped like a boat. Källström suggests it was a votive ship or "censer" (*navicula*),[580] thus extending the spectre of possible meanings for the concept of *helgedomakar*. Nevertheless, boat-formed reliquaries (*navis* and *liburnum*) have existed in Danish reliquary lists, too, so I would not exclude the possibility that the one in Växjö was also a reliquary.[581] The shape could be a reference to either St Ursula or St Sunniva, or the legend of St Sigfrid of Växjö, who arrived by boat from England.[582]

*Vase* or *vas* is a word nearly as vague as *kar*. Braun groups it, with *reliquiarium*, in general names that say nothing about the form of an object. He found mentions of *vas* with regard to many items, even a reliquary bust, but also *vases* that were merely mentioned without any description.[583] In the Franciscan lists of Copenhagen and Roskilde, all the reliquaries in the abbeys are described collectively as *vasa* – as in the general term for liturgical vessels (*vasa sacra*).[584]

The vase reliquaries individually described in Nordic documents are richly decorated, but their shapes are hard to decipher from the descriptions. The vase reliquary in the list at Roskilde Abbey is described in more detail than most other reliquaries on the same list;

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[578] FMU VIII, 330.

[579] *Item ij store hwide skaller meth sølff beslagne och forgylthe oppo lxx loth. Jtem en brwn skalligh beslagen meth sølff forgylth paa xxx loth. Jtem eth anneth høgth helligdoms kar forgylth paa lx loth.*

*Jtem eth liideth høght kar wforgylth paa xx loth. Jtem ij eller iij anner smo helligdoms kar och meth sølff beslagne. Jthem en stor deligh monstrantz forgylth som er tiil høghe altere poo eth pund.*

*Jtem ij andhre smo monstrantzer som wore tiil thee altere ther aff brende weghe hooss xvj mark sølff*. DN 8:528. See also Liepe 2015a, 75–76.

[580] Källström 1939, 119.

[581] In some cases, it sounds as if lamps could also be included in boat-shaped reliquaries; SRD VIII, 285 ("*in navi sive Candelabro*"); 288 ("*in navi cum candelabro*").

[582] For a ship reliquary with Ursula relics, see Legner 1995, 270.

[583] Braun 1940, 21.

[584] SRD VIII, 269; 282.

but it is still hard to work out how it looked. We do know, however, that it was wooden, footed, and painted white, except for the green foot and edges.[585] But what distinguished it from all the other pyxes on the list? As we saw earlier (see *Cristallo* above), a pyx could also be called "*vas vitreum*" after its central element. In the church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, a "vase of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary" most likely meant a reliquary illustrated with an image of the Annunciation. The shape or material are not revealed, but it contained relics of the Virgin Mary and the biblical mothers – Anne and Elisabeth.[586] One small silver vase reliquary in Lund had two heads sculpted on top, possibly with gilt glorias; while another vase reliquary of gilt silver was round, covered with images and precious stones even underneath, which might indicate a display arrangement based on suspension.[587]

Some of the *vasa* may have been vases in the contemporary sense as well. Vases or urns may well have been repurposed as reliquaries, and Hahn groups them under "found" relics or reliquaries.[588] Known examples of these are made of valuable stone materials, received as royal gifts from Byzantium or other oriental kingdoms. No such vases are known from the Nordic countries, but other objects can have been repurposed as "found" reliquaries. One such object is a horn which, as Hahn observes, was regularly used for drinking, hunting and other activities, but can also be found among church treasures – possibly donated as votives.[589]

The Latin *capsa* often seems to refer to rather small box-like or cylindrical containers. Braun defines *capsa* (*capsella*, *capsula*) as one of the oldest names for reliquaries: it has been known since 6th century and was used by Gregory of Tours among others.[590] At first the name meant a reliquary in general, but then it came to mean some kind of wooden box. In late medieval German sources, it has denoted specifically a pyx or a capsule reliquary. In medieval Nordic wills,

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[585] "*vase albo ligneo cum pede & capite viridis coloris*", SRD VIII, 276.
[586] *In vase Annunciationis beatae Mariae Virginis (--)*, SRD VIII, 261; 448.
[587] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 92; 94.
[588] Hahn 2012, 173–174.
[589] Hahn 2012, 114–116.
[590] Braun 1940, 40–42; Bartlett 2013, 264.

*capsa*, without any further details, appears among the possessions of wealthy individuals. *Capsa* also refers to (cylindrical) folders for keeping letters or books.[591] The earliest written evidence of Nordic use of the word meaning reliquary is a thirteenth-century note in *Liber daticus lundensis*, when Archbishop Uffo Trugotsen donated a silver *capsa* reliquary to Lund Cathedral in 1234.[592] The fifteenth-century inventory of the St George altar in Turku Cathedral also mentions two *capsa* reliquaries,[593] but nothing else is said about their weight, material or shape.

In a document from 1397, the diminutive form of *capsula* – denoting a smaller box – is used to describe a reliquary of St Eskil in Eskilstuna Abbey.[594] The shrine containing most of the body of St Eskil was reportedly in Strängnäs (for at least the late 16th century), but the abbey had split the relics up between different reliquaries, so perhaps the *capsula* was one of these. An exquisitely made silver *capsula* reliquary was donated by Archbishop Andreas Sunesen to Lund Cathedral in 1228, but with no further description.[595]

Two other vague terms for reliquaries that we must note before moving on, which are rarely found in medieval documents, are "case" (*theca*), and "little box" (*cistula*). In 1346, Canon Henrik Ludvigsson bequeathed a silver *theca* full of relics to the Trinity Church in Uppsala.[596] Two examples of *cistula* reliquaries existed in the Franciscan Abbey in Roskilde: one was "large" and made of ivory, while the other was "long and black".[597] In both cases, the size does not seem to correspond to the diminutive term.

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[591] Erslev 1901, 182; SDHK 38002; SDHK 9515.
[592] Lunde domkapitels gavebøger, 311.
[593] *due capse pro reliquiis*, REA 579 (no date).
[594] SDHK 14845; Bygdén 1954, 327.
[595] SRD III, 524; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 34.
[596] *vnam thecam argenteam plenam reliquiis sanctorum*, SDHK 5312; for both portable and larger examples of *theca* from elsewhere, see Bartlett 2013, 264–266.
[597] SRD VIII, 273; 276. -An unspecified number of gilt copper *cistae* were included in the Danish royal collection; Jacobæus 1696, 63.

The actual shapes of many lost reliquaries are unknown due to the ambiguous terminology in medieval documents, but nevertheless they do not remain completely mysterious. Many other details of their design, materials, content, owners, and use are documented. In monstrances, transparence was a central feature; one example, brought to the North as royal gifts, was a crystal held by angel figures. In pyxes, the container was often made of exotic materials, but could also come with a skilful embroidery referring to the relics within. One of the challenges concerning monstrances and pyxes is to discern between the ones used as reliquaries and the ones for the host; this is explicit only when the object itself features a reference to relics, as in the embroidered pyxes, or is included in a list of reliquaries.

## 5 – Reliquary Crosses

Like shrines or caskets, crosses or crucifixes are very common shapes for reliquaries in Nordic countries and elsewhere in Europe. The first cross reliquaries entered the region with the establishment of Christianity, and new ones continued to be made and purchased up until the Reformation. As the cross continued to be used as a symbol after the Reformation, reliquaries in this form might have been allowed to stay in churches, but many were still confiscated due to being made from valuable materials. Only objects interpreted as reliquaries are included in the following discussion. For instance, large life-size sculptures of the Christ on the cross, with a relic inserted in the sculpture, are primarily sculptures rather than reliquaries. This chapter is focused primarily on reliquaries in the form of processional or altar crosses and cross pendants. Even with those, it can be asked whether the reliquary function is secondary in them, too: the cross is a powerful symbol that is not dependent on relics to fulfil its functions, and the relics are often hidden inside.

Defining a reliquary cross is not easy. Crosses included in lists of reliquaries must be such, but in inventories and confiscation lists, it is seldom specified whether they were reliquaries or not. In wills, the presence of relics inside a cross is mentioned, as for its owner, the relic would have been an unforgettable detail, but maybe not for the more financially focused confiscators and authors of inventories. This is reflected in the catalogue, where only certain reliquary crosses are included. It can nevertheless be concluded that some of the crosses

confiscated were inevitably reliquaries: though no such items are separately mentioned in the confiscation documents, we know that they existed in Nordic churches. Another problem is that the size and type of cross is rarely given in the Nordic written sources. Terms such as 'large' and 'small' might be the only clues allowing us to distinguish between processional and altar or pectoral crosses.[598] In any case, crosses of various sizes, shapes, and functions are an essential part of the interior and liturgy of the Christian Church. In this respect, reliquary crosses cannot be observed as a wholly independent group of objects, but rather as a sub-group of crosses in general.[599]

It is often presupposed that a reliquary cross will be a *staurotheca*, in other words contain a relic of the True Cross, but just how often is that the case? As Hahn has pointed out, and the Nordic material confirms, there is no automatic relation between the shape and contents of a reliquary, nor between its name and contents. Nevertheless, cross-shaped reliquaries are among those in which the shape and contents coincide the most frequently. Among those with listed contents, the majority – but not all – did apparently contain relics of the True Cross. In smaller reliquaries, it was the only relic, while in larger examples, it might be accompanied by numerous other relics of Christ and even more numerous relics of other saints, including Nordic ones.[600] Cross relics were not only found in cross-shaped reliquaries, though. Medieval documents include an array of terms referring to relics of the True Cross, the reliquaries housing them, and crucifix reliquaries, but they are not always used coherently – being synonymous in one source but distinct in another. Even a reliquary called "*Lignum Domini*", in the inventory of Ribe Cathedral, might not be an exact reflection of its name. Although it sounds like a relic, it is not listed among relics, but among other ecclesiastic items, without a description of its shape or contents.[601] I would classify it as a cross-shaped item, but Braun mentions French *Lignum Domini* reliquaries,

[598] See Källström 1939, 111–114; Immonen 2009, 185.
[599] For more on the history and meanings of reliquary crosses, see Hahn 2012, 73–102.
[600] SRD VIII, 260; 264; 266; 280; 282; 289.
[601] Ribe Oldemoder, 115.

one of which was described as "round with a foot" – which sounds like a footed pyx.[602]

The exceptional status of the relics of the Cross separates them from other relics: they are not related to a saint, but directly to Christ's suffering and the salvation. In Nordic lists of relics, their hierarchical superiority is clear as they are usually listed before the other items. They were among the most widely distributed and sought after relics, which was partly the result of, in Hahn's words "what amounted to an ancient advertising campaign" by the fourth-century Bishop Cyril of Jerusalem, in an attempt to attract more pilgrims to the Levant.[603]

### 5.1 Altar Crosses and Processional Crosses

Crosses containing relics can be categorised according to a number of criteria: their constituent materials, style period, size, and function. There are crosses made to be reliquaries, while others were primarily made for processions and other liturgical uses which were then further consecrated by the insertion of a relic. It is difficult to draw a definite line between them, but functionality might be the best criterion in this case. As Immonen has observed, altar or processional crosses with relic compartments on the reverse side "cannot be considered to be reliquary crosses *per se*".[604] On the other hand, when crosses are listed in medieval documents, the fact of containing relics is mentioned, but the liturgical function is omitted. Even their sizes are often left unspecified, or they are only measured in comparison to each other.[605] Thus, it is often impossible to discern altar-sized crosses from small pendant crosses unless a chain is mentioned. In many cases, I believe a "small cross" is likely to be a pendant, made for personal use.

The crosses included in the fifteenth-century list of reliquaries in Lund Cathedral were obviously reliquaries *per se*. They are described in detail, followed by a statement of their contents and donors. Three cross reliquaries were given the place of honour at the very beginning of the list. All three are decorated with gems, and one of them seems

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[602] Braun 1940, 73.
[603] Hahn 1997b, 1085.
[604] Immonen 2009, 179.
[605] See e.g. the Lund reliquary crosses in Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89.

to have had two cross-shaped windows or openings. Two contained parts of the Holy Cross, while the largest of them had a piece of the column from the flagellation of Christ instead. Not all reliquary crosses merited a place at the beginning of the list, though, as two small silver crosses are mentioned later on.[606]

Reliquary crosses – or "crosses with relics" – featured in the treasure of many churches, but they might also be owned by individual clerics or rulers. Bishop Henrik of Linköping planned to donate a cross-shaped reliquary to his successor in the 13th century – a gilt silver cross with unnamed relics.[607] This may have been either an altar cross or a personally worn pendant. A reliquary cross was also among the personal possessions that, in 1346, King Magnus Eriksson and Queen Blanche planned to donate to Vadstena Abbey. This silver cross, containing a fragment of the True Cross with a label written in Latin, would be placed on the main altar,[608] so it can be assumed that it was an altar cross. Mentioning the label might also mean that it was visible inside the reliquary, perhaps through a crystal lens. The *authentica* is seldom mentioned in medieval documents, but crystals appear often. In Stavanger Cathedral, Bishop Hoskold had apparently commissioned a gilt cross reliquary with a crystal to be made in the early 16th century. A relic of the holy cross, acquired by him, was set under the crystal.[609]

As for existing altar or processional crosses, it has not been easy to recognise them as reliquaries from museum catalogues; most crosses explicitly catalogued as reliquaries seem to be pectoral ones. As crosses were not within the focus of this study, the discovery of remaining non-pendant reliquary crosses through detailed study will have to be included in a later project. Thus only a couple of examples will be mentioned here.

The altar cross from the Swedish Östra Ryd church (see image 30) has five crystals on its front side; the largest crystal is in the middle,

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606 Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89; 99; 105.

607 "*Crucem argenteam deauratam in qua reliquie sunt recondite*", SDHK 1248; see also Källström 2011, 114.

608 *vart. sylf kors. med ligno domini. scriwæt annæn væghin med latin. hwat hælghudoma þer mit i æru*, SDHK 5307.

609 DN 4:1074.

on top of the relic compartment, and thus may have offered a glimpse of the relics. In the altar cross of Lempäälä, Finland, there is no such view; a five-compartment relic niche exists on the reverse side, while four oval crystals are inserted on the front side, unrelated to it. Under the uppermost crystal, a liturgical greeting written in red is visible on a greenish background: *pax vobis[cum]*.[610] Just like many other texts in holy objects, it is not there to be seen by all but rather to express the message inherent in all processional crosses. The foot, allowing it to stand on the altar, can be detached and swapped for a different, longer foot better for carrying the cross in procession.[611] During the procession or on the altar, laypeople would not see the text, but it would be held towards them, silently greeting them, while the priest or bishop would actually pronounce the greeting. A fifteenth-century gilt copper cross from Masku church, with a five-compartment space for relics, may have been adaptable in the same way. According to Immonen, these kinds of multifunctional cross were common in Finland.[612]

Inlaid crystal or glass could also be simply decorative. In the case of a lost, gilt cross with five "glass pieces" confiscated from Mäskälä Church, Finland, the function is uncertain.[613] Extant crosses prove that "glass" could describe windows showing tiny relics, but glass or crystal was also used for mere illusion, as in a cross from Västerås Cathedral. The cross is lost, but a French silver Christ figure from early 14th century and five oval crystals are preserved; but instead of relics, pieces of red cloth are attached under each crystal. The red textiles were interpreted as relics by art historians in the 1960s and 1970s, but it seems more likely that the red cloth was used to create a to give the crystal a gem-like hue, simultaneously alluding to the five wounds of Christ.[614]

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[610] Immonen 2007b, 4–5.
[611] Nordman 1980, 57–58; Museovirasto, topografinen arkisto nr 360.
[612] Riska et al. 1961, 164; Nordman 1980, 58; Immonen 2009, 174.
[613] Källström 1939, 317. The church is currently known as Vanaja church.
[614] Ekström 1976, 29; Andersson 1960, 1–17.

### 5.2 Pectoral Cross Reliquaries

Some of the smallest reliquary crosses are pendants or pectoral crosses, used as instruments of personal devotion and carried on one's person permanently. They were typically owned by clerics, but it can be deduced, from medieval wills and the provenance of some extant pendants (most of them were found in the ground near private farms, not near a church), that some laypeople owned them too.[615] Pendants donated to churches or altars could also be seen suspended on church walls, shrines or sculptures, contributing to the holy presence.[616]

Of the many reliquary crosses mentioned in medieval sources, only a few are described as having a chain attached. More pectoral crosses are thus probably hidden behind these scarcely worded documents. This might be the case with a donation to Riseberga Abbey in 1322 of a cross relic by Lady Katarina, wife of the lawspeaker and knight, Nils Björnsson. She donated two golden buckles or brooches to accompany it, for the abbess to commission a cross reliquary for the holy relic.[617] In 1544, only one cross was among the confiscated objects from the abbey; it was a pectoral cross with a non-gilt chain. Although there is no mention of there being any relics inside, Källström suggests this could have been the reliquary she had commissioned.[618] Although it was not directly stated in the donation document, the relic and the planned reliquary were perhaps a personal gift to the abbess, as a private, wearable devotional instrument.

Another will demonstrates how the shape and contents of a pectoral cross may greatly vary. Laurencius Nikolai, Dean of Roskilde Cathedral, made his will in 1434, leaving to a military friend or

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[615] The locations of discovery should however not be overinterpreted, as many different events may have led to an object endig up in a field; on this, see Immonen & Räsänen 2011, 35–53.

[616] A cross pendant was bequeathed to a Virgin Mary sculpture in Lund Cathedral, possibly to be suspended on it. SDHK 17476 (original in pergament: RA nr. 0101): *item ymagini beate Marie virginis in medio pauimenti ecclesie nostre Lundensis crucem nostram auream cum cathenis*; see also Immonen 2009, 179–181; on Byzantine pectoral crosses, see Hahn 2012, 81–84.

[617] *particulam quam habeo de ligno domini, cum duabus fibulis aureis de quibus domina abbatissa eiusdem monasterii, crucem fieri faciat, jn qua eadem particula de ligno domini, honorifice reponatur*, SDHK 3166; Närkes medeltida urkunder, 31–32.

[618] Källström 1939, 235.

relative named Esger, his golden, chained cross with relics of St Lawrence.[619] Christ was present in the shape of the reliquary, but the relics were of the dean's holy namesake and patron.

The earliest wave of pectoral cross reliquaries to reach the North seems to have occurred in the 10th century, and the most recent were in the early 16th century. Several medieval cross reliquaries in the region have also survived with a chain attached. While the crosses reflect Byzantine or British influences, the chains are often decorated with animal or dragon heads (from Nordic pre-Christian imagery) reminiscent of the gables of stave churches and Nordic house- or chapel-shaped reliquaries.

The earliest remaining private pectoral reliquary crosses in Denmark have been discussed by art historian Fritze Lindahl, and Aron Andersson has written about the crosses of the same period in Sweden. Most of those early Byzantine-style Nordic cross pendants have rounded cross-ends flanked by two small circles on the corners of the cross-arms, Christ is depicted on the front and round medallions representing the four Evangelists are on the reverse side in bust format; otherwise, their techniques vary from engraving to relief and enamel. Perhaps the most famous, due to its well-preserved polychromed enamelling (see image 29a-b), was found in the thirteenth-century Royal Tombs of St Bendt Church in Ringsted. One of the queens – Dagmar or Richiza – was buried with it.[620] In the silver cross found in Gundslevmagle, Nordfalster, the round medallions are ornamental and placed outside the angular cross-ends.[621]

Another type of Byzantine-style cross is angularly shaped and illustrated with engraved images. The earliest example from Denmark is a fragment from Randers, Ålum: the reverse side of a gilt and enamelled bronze reliquary cross with Celtic spiral patterns and a figure that, according to Lindahl, cannot be identified as Christ. In her view, it is possibly a sign of early trade or other contacts with ninth-

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[619] *crucem auream cum reliquiis sancti Laurencii et cum cathenis*, Erslev 1901, 207.

[620] Lindahl 1990, 1–10; Andersson 1967, 34–43; http://natmus.dk/presse-og-nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2012/relikviekors-gemmer-maaske-en-splint-af-kristi-kors/ (cited 6.2.2017); http://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/soelvskat-aabnet-afsloerer-et-tredje-relikviekors (cited 21.3.2017); see also Hahn 2012, 225.

[621] Lindahl 1990, 6–8.

century Northumberland.[622] A cross from Danish Orø (see image 28) also has the engraved words *Isaco* and *Olavcununce*, which are seen as signs of its Nordic origins, but the text seems unrelated to the engraved images representing Jesus and Mary. *Olavcununce* has been interpreted as "King Olaf", so possibly a reference to the relics of St Olaf; while *Isaco* may have been the name of a wealthy local who had purchased the reliquary (probably together with relics of the Holy Cross) and marked it as his own.[623]

A cross and round reliquary pendant have been combined to the same chain in three twelfth-century items from Halikko, Dune and Slängs. In each of them, the medallion bears the image of a lion, interpreted as a symbol of Christ.[624]

A small, golden reliquary cross with gems was accidentally found inside the top of a large wooden triumphal crucifix from Roskilde Cathedral. It is unusual to find a reliquary of such precious materials permanently hidden within a sculpture, and had probably been worn by a cleric before its insertion. Its specific origin is not known, but it has been estimated as dating from the 12th century due to its Byzantine style indicated by the two horizontal cross-arms. The golden crucifix is decorated with fifteen gems and seven pearls. The colourful gems – red, yellow, green, and blue – are irregularly distributed along the cross-arms. In the middle, where two arms meet, is a double-cross pattern of red gems.[625] A parallel object with a similar simple shape, gem decoration and two horizontal arms was found in Tønsberg, Norway; unlike all the other preserved cross pendants, it reveals its contents – a splinter of wood – through a narrow, cross-shaped slit in the middle.[626] The small, golden, late-medieval cross from Horn (Västergötland) ressembles the Roskilde

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[622] Lindahl 1990, 2–4. Britannic influences have also been seen in a cross from Gåtebo, Sweden, as well; Andersson, however, dismisses these origins and associates the cross to a Nordic tradition. Andersson 1967, 39–40.

[623] Lindahl 1990, 4–6. For another cross of the same type, see also http://natmus.dk/presse-og-nyheder/nyhedsarkiv/2012/endnu-et-relikviekors-fundet-paa-bornholm/ (cited 6.2.2017). Two such *enkolpion* crosses were also found in the Halikko hoard in South Finland.

[624] Immonen 2009, 181–182; Holmqvist 1963, 54–55.

[625] Nyborg 2003, 165–167.

[626] Horgen et al. (s.d.), 85.

and Tønsberg crosses in its simple shape, but lacks any gems or other decorations or ornamentation, only illustrated with an engraved image of Christ on one side and the Passion on the other.[627]

The latest medieval reliquary crosses, dated between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, represent a more elaborate type, characterised by trefoiled cross-arms.[628] The illustrations or decorations vary from engraved images to cast relief versions and more sophisticated ones with separately formed, three-dimensional details.[629] The Norwegian crosses also have a square middle part (see image 27). Several of them were possibly made by the same Hanseatic goldsmiths in Bergen, possibly even from the same mould.[630] One of the best examples is a gilt silver cross with chain from Tinne farm in Heddal, Telemark. In the middle of the cross is a rectangular space for relics, with Calvary depicted on it. The trefoil cross-arms have the symbols of the Evangelists. On the other side, the reliquary is decorated by foliage patterns. The monogrammed back plate of the central space is more recent than the rest, and it has been nailed shut.[631]

Although most of the small reliquary crosses were pendants, there are exceptions. A small trefoiled cross in gilt silver was found inside the old altar of the Föglö church in Åland. It seems to have been placed inside a locked wooden box before being inserted into the *sepulchrum*. Although it was hidden, its sophisticated details imply that it was intended for viewing, but it does not have an attachment for a chain. On the front is a three-dimensional Christ positioned on a two-dimensional, engraved cross. The cross ends are marked on the front with the letters *J*, *L*, *M* and *M* (the initials of the Evangelists) and on the back by *R*, *S*, *g* and *b*, with an *m* in the middle of the cross, interpreted to mean "Beloved blessed Mary, mother of the Saviour King" (*Maria grata benedicta. Mater Regis Salvatoris*). According to an

[627] SHM 898.

[628] Danish examples in Lindahl 1988, 204; see also DNM D12258

[629] Compare e.g. items 23260 and 24060 from the Swedish History Museum, item 12258 from Danish National Museum and item NF.2004-0361 from the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History.

[630] Horgen et al. (s.d.), 84–85.

[631] Kielland 1927, 218–219, ill. 310; Hohler 1997, 397.

*authentica*, at least a relic of Mary Magdalene was among its contents.[632]

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The reliquary function of crosses is not always mentioned in medieval documents, and it is also not visible at first sight in extant altar or processional crosses. Pendants or pectoral crosses are more common among the surviving medieval reliquary crosses, and they are also frequently found in excavations; this is related to the fact that they were the most typical privately owned instruments of devotion. Pectoral crosses are also often explicitly mentioned in medieval wills as containing relics. The majority of surviving Nordic cross pendants are either enamelled or engraved crosses with rounded arms from the Byzantine area or Nordic copies of these, or locally made ones from the later Middle Ages with trefoiled cross-arms and a square plate in the middle.

## 6 – Sculptural reliquaries

Silver or gold sculptures representing saints are mentioned in several documents from Nordic churches. They were often reliquaries, but the function was not always recorded. Only one sculptural reliquary has survived to the present day in the region – a silver image of St Catherine of Alexandria, found in Linköping.

The terminology in medieval documents does not always permit the distinction of reliquary images from other kinds of images, sculptures from reliefs or paintings, or metal sculptures from wooden ones. Unlike metal images, wooden sculptures representing the full-body figure of a saint are not usually intended as reliquaries, but relics have sometimes been inserted in them. These wooden "secondary reliquaries" are discussed in the end of this chapter.

[632] Dreijer 1967, 16; 21–23; Immonen 2009, 179–180, 189; Immonen 2011, 209. Ringbom 2010, 33. As Immonen argues, the materially and visually sophisticated cross did not necessarily mean it was meant for display, except perhaps to impress the participants of the ceremony for the altar consecration.

Reliquaries in the shape of a saint's whole body have previously been categorised as 'topical reliquaries' (together with those in the shape of body-parts –covered in the third part of this thesis) because their shape was assumed to depict or imply the relics contained within.[633] If the concept of topical or mimetic reliquaries is associated more widely to figurative or representational form, then house-shaped reliquaries as well as crucifixes could be classified under it; so could reliquaries named *Civitas* or *Navis*, presumably shaped as towns or boats, or a star-shaped reliquary, which could be perceived as both figurative and ornamental.[634] Although the relation between the reliquary and its contents is seldom simple, the grouping makes sense if we accept the idea that their shape is intended to refer to, not only their contents, but also their specific cultic identity. However, only sculptural figures of saints are discussed in this chapter. Following an argument by Thelma Jexlev, I assume that the reasons behind the shapes of these saintly figures do not exclusively lie in what they contain, yet at the same time I acknowledge that there might often be a correlation between a reliquary's shape and the relics within.

### 6.1 *Ymago* Reliquaries

According to Braun, the word *imago* (or *ymago*) has been used to refer to sculptural representations of one or more religious figures, functioning as a reliquary. The term is common from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. In German inventories, the word *bild* is also used,[635] and *Bild* or *belete/beläte/belate* also appears in Nordic medieval documents alongside *imago*. Some of the "images" might also have been busts, but due to lack of further evidence and in light of Braun's observations, I have grouped all these "images" under the category of full-figure sculptures. Naturally, not all sculptures contain relics. In this chapter, I only discuss those lost sculptures that are defined or indicated in medieval documents as reliquaries, and one existing reliquary sculpture.

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[633] E.g. Axel-Nilsson 1989, 77.

[634] On the concept of topical or mimetic reliquary, see e.g. Munk 2003, 41–52; for reliquaries with other shapes, see Braun 1940, 75–76; SRD VIII, 126; 266.

[635] Braun 1940, 66–67. For more on metal sculptures, see also Belting 1994, 299–303.

When the same document includes examples of both *ymago* and *belete*, a difference between them must be assumed. One possible criterion is the material, which is also expressed in the list of the items in Bishop Aslak Bolt's chapel in Bergen: it mentions a Virgin Mary *beläte* with no reference to material, followed by two *ymagines* of wood portraying the Virgin and St Paul.[636] The fact that wood is mentioned in only two of the images might imply that the third one was not made of wood, but providing alternative interpretations for this difference is problematic. As seen above, however, neither *belete* nor *ymago* is exclusively used in any specific way; the use of the words seems to follow a different logic in each document.

A third, rarely used term is *effigium*. Canon Nils Jonsson used the term in his will in 1368, when he donated silver to make a reliquary. During his pilgrimage he had acquired relics, including the fragment of a bandage used by St Francis, and he wanted the Franciscans in Linköping to use his silver donation to make a gilt silver image of St Francis, in which this relic could be placed.[637]

Most of the medieval documents say nothing about the shape, details, or age of the sculptures, but in case they were recognised as reliquaries, the contents are often mentioned. The confiscation documents often mention their weight in silver or gold, and thus help in estimating the size, but say nothing about the images' eventual reliquary function. Källström notes that nearly twenty metal images of saints were confiscated in Sweden and Finland.[638] The number seems high, but according to Källström, one single altarpiece in Lübeck contained a much higher concentration.[639] Many of them may have been reliquaries or parts of reliquaries.[640] In medieval reliquary lists, the size of an object is only relative to others on the list, so in Lund

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[636] *Æit warar frwa belate med taan ok æit cors med taan Jtem due ymagines, ymago beate virginis et sancti Pauli de lignis.* DN 15:42.

[637] *Jtem do fratribus minoribus ibidem constitutis vnam marcam puri pro effigie sancti francisci formanda in argento deaurato in qua effigie ponenda est vna pars demembrana, quos semper vtibatur sanctus franciscus ad tegendum cicatricem vulneris in latere*, SDHK 9267.

[638] Källström 1939, 114.

[639] Källström 1939, 146.

[640] For example, the St Anne confiscated in Pyhtää church was probably made of silver and possibly a reliquary or part of a reliquary casket, as Elina Räsänen suggests; see Räsänen 2009, 93.

Cathedral for instance, there were two silver images of St Lawrence – one "large" and one "small".[641] The difference in size need not have been remarkable, but just enough to distinguish them.

The only remaining Nordic metal statuette-reliquary (see image 31a-b) was found buried in a field as part of the Linköping treasure (see below in the chapter on church silver confiscations). It has been estimated as a piece from the first decade of the 16th century. It is a partly gilded silver figure of St Catherine of Alexandria, standing with a slight smile in a gracious position. She is wearing a dress and mantle, which is wrapped in front of her waist. Her long gilt hair runs down her back, topped with a gilt crown decorated with pearls (only three remain). She once held a wheel and a sword in her hands, but only a fragment of the sword is now left so that the empty hands now seem to be making a welcoming gesture. The wheel was already broken when the reliquary was found, but in the 1690s it was repaired in Stockholm by the goldsmith Petter Henning. Now even the new wheel has been removed, but in old photographs it can still be seen. The saint stands on a six-sided, longish podium with quatrefoil-latticed windows and pillar reliefs in the corners. The upper edge of the podium has the text: "Bequeathed by the priest Nils Johansson Lenck, prebendary of Stockholm Cathedral, in 1509" (*testame(n)tu(m) nicolai ioh(ann)is lenck p(r)e(s)b(ite)ri p(re)ben(dati) stockholmen(sis) ann(o) do(mi)ni Mdix*).[642] The height of the reliquary is 36.5 cm. It is empty, but according to a supposedly mistaken eighteenth-century note, it used to contain a relic of the saint's local namesake, Katarina of Vadstena.[643] Although there may have simply been some confusion concerning the two saints, an intentional pairing of the two Catherines should not be completely ruled out. The reliquary might have well contained relics of both saints.

Probably mostly because of the text in the podium, it has been assumed earlier that the reliquary was made in Sweden. Stylistically, however, the sculpture seems closely related to two German, similarly partly gilt Gothic reliquary statuettes of St Barbara (now in the

[641] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94–95.

[642] af Ugglas 1938, 116–117; Källström 1939, 114–115; 255–256; Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 43; Mörkfors 1987, 46–57; Tegnér 1997c, 400.

[643] Hildebrand 1903, 641; Liepe 2015a, 85.

Walters Art Museum) and a bishop (in the Hermitage Museum).[644] I have not yet been able to establish an explicit historical connection between the three, but am inclined to believe that the Linköping sculpture may be of the same German origin, with the text added later in Sweden.

During the confiscations, while the statue of St Catherine was kept hidden and safe (buried in the field) in Linköping, three silver images were confiscated from Stockholm Cathedral – an image of St Barbara, one of St Henrik, and another St Catherine statuette of the same size as the one in Linköping. The fact that the Linköping statuette also bears a reference to the Stockholm Cathedral has led earlier historians to think the two statuettes were the same. Though it is not entirely impossible, it does not seem historically plausible that a successfully confiscated object would later be found hidden in a field. Källström has instead suggested that the two statues might have both been commissioned by Nils Johansson Lenck and made by the same silversmith. Apparently Lenck had family connections in Linköping, too, which could explain the donation there.[645]

Relics and reliquaries were given as gifts to seal unions or friendships – between families, countries, or churches. The occasion was often marked with the coats of arms of the people involved being engraved or painted onto the reliquaries. Many important relics arrived in the North through political or diplomatic connections in this way. Sculptural reliquaries of gold or silver were particularly expensive and prestigious, and thus very suitable as presents, often given by kings. St Mary's Church in Oslo had a gilt silver image of St Louis with a golden crown and containing a relic of St Louis' finger, which had been donated by St Louis' grandson, Philip IV of France, to Haakon V of Norway in 1304. King Philip had commissioned the piece from goldsmith Thiebaut.[646] The height of the sculpture was roughly 60 centimetres. This kind of South European treasures, brought to the North while the local relic cult and its visual expressions were still in their early stages, must have served as

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[644] Walters, accession number 57.1009; Hermitage, inventory number Ф-132.

[645] Källström 1939, 4–5, 114, 255–256; Nisbeth 2001, 82.

[646] *Jtem ymago sancti Lludouici regis Francie forgylth alne høgth och weffwer viij eller x mark sølff.* DN 258; Johnsen 1965, 151–156; see also Liepe 2015a, 84–85.

models for local goldsmiths and commissioners of ecclesiastic art. The St Mary's Church also had a gilt image of the Swedish king, St Eric, equal in size to the St Louis, and also possibly a reliquary.[647]

A silver reliquary sculpture, shaped as an archbishop, in the Lund Cathedral was a royal gift of foreign origin as well. It is described in the fifteenth-century *Ordo in ostensione sanctarum reliquiarum* as follows:

> In a large, gilt silver image in the form of an archbishop, standing with a pyx in hand, offered by the most venerable Sir Archbishop Petrus Lycke, [and] donated to him by Philip, King of England.
>
> *In magna ymagine argentea deaurata ad formam archiepiscopi insulati, gestantis pixidem in manu, quam obtulit venerabilissimus dominus petrus lycke archiepiscopus donatam sibi per phillippum regem anglie.*648

The text has some errors, either due to misunderstanding or poor writing skills, but since there is already quite a lot known about Archbishop Peder Lykke and the royal affairs he was responsible for, this is not a problem. It can be assumed that the large and very valuable reliquary was certainly donated by the King of England, but it was Henry IV, not Philip, who did so on the occasion of his daughter Philippa's marriage to King Eric of Pomerania in 1406 at Lund Cathedral. Peder Lykke had come to the English royal court to help in the negotiations towards the union of the two royal families, and the king showed his gratefulness with this suitably magnificent present for the bishop.[649]

Apparently, the Lund list is the only existing record of the king's gift to Peder Lykke, though records of King Henry IV show that he

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[647] *Jtem ymago sancti Erici regis Swecie forgylth oppo viij mark sølff.* DN 8:528. -Kielland interpreted these both images as reliquary busts, which in my opinion is theoretically possible concerning the fact that crowned head reliquaries of kings were often commissioned by kings, and that the church was one of the royal chapels; see Kielland 1927, 151–152.

[648] SRD VIII, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 93–94.

[649] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 93–94; SRD VIII, 449.

was generous with his gifts. The same list shows, for instance, that he commissioned a reliquary of rock crystal and gold for a relic of Christ's tunic to then be sent as a present to King Eric's mother, Queen Margaret. The pages of the king's register for the years 1402–03 are partially damaged,[650] and the information of the other reliquaries donated to Lund might have been lost there.

Why did the scribe confuse the names of Henry and Philip? One explanation could be that the official donor of the reliquary was maybe the twelve-year-old royal bride, Philippa. In that case, the scribe's intention might have been to write '*Philippam filiam regis anglie'*. It seems that relics and reliquaries were important for the young royal couple, as Philippa and Eric are known to have visited relics in the Holy Land and Venice and (more frequently) Vadstena Abbey.[651] If the list was written in the 1470s, the royal wedding would still have been a fresh memory in the historical consciousness of the cathedral community even if the royal couple was no longer alive.

The reliquary was shaped as an archbishop standing with a pyx in hand. Inside were relics of high value, including fragments of Christ's tomb and of three English archbishops, St Sigfrid being the foremost – and he is probably the archbishop represented by the statuette. Sigfrid's importance for the conversion of Swedes and Danes and his position as Bishop of Växjö is also mentioned in the text, which is more than the brief descriptions for the other relics. The description adds that the relics were in the pyx or that they were named on the pyx.[652] Unless the sculpture was very large, the pyx in the saint's hand could hardly have had room for several relics or for a text concerning the relics; a possible explanation could be that the *authentica* was placed inside it, while the relics were inside the saint. A list from the Dominican Abbey of Bergen in 1530 apparently included a reliquary

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[650] Stratford 2012, 120.

[651] SDHK 19251; SDHK 27358; SDHK 19393

[652] The list of the six different relics inside the archbishop figure: *De sancto johanne bewerlaco archiepiscopo eboracenci. Item de sancto sigfrido archiepiscopo eboracenci qui postea factus episcopus vexionensis totam sweciam & partem dacie conuertit ad fidem orthodoxam. Item de sepulcro domini. Item de beato petro apostolo. Item de sancto cyriaco martire. Item de sancto gallo archiepiscopo cantuariensi. Hec predicta sunt in pixide*. SRD VIII, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 93–94.

that similarly combined a sculpture and a different container: "a silver image of St Mary with a little silver monstrance".[653] The monstrance in this case might also represent an eucharistic pyx, depicted in her hand as an attribute.

Lund Cathedral received three more sculptural reliquaries of silver in the 15th century: the images of the Cathedral's patron St Lawrence, St Barbara, and St Canute. The sculpture of St Canute contained only one relic, a bone of St Canute, which could indicate that the container and contents were donated together and were unambiguously related to his cult.[654] The donor, canon Nicolaus Tuvonis, may have had access to relics of St Canute. This is not the case with the reliquaries of St Lawrence and St Barbara, which did not contain any relics of the depicted saints, but instead of several others.[655] This can be interpreted at least in two ways: theologically or practically. Historian Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen suggests that the lack of direct connection between the shape and contents of the St Lawrence figure may imply a wider, symbolic or theological meaning – that the reliquary was meant to represent both the Cathedral, dedicated to St Lawrence, and the Church, or the community of saints, in a more general sense.[656] Although this dimension may have been evident to the clerics, it is likely that the donor, lady Christina of Gladsax, commissioned it simply to honor the patron saint of the Cathedral. As for the image of St Barbara, it was most likely chosen as a token of devotion for the personal patron saint of the donor, lady Barbara Brahe, who was active in promoting the cult of St Barbara.[657] In both cases, in fact, the practical explanation for the apparent mismatch seems to be that the donors' choice of the depicted saints was made unrelated to the available relics. Both donors were private persons who, despite their wealth, did not have unlimited access to relics. The relics for the St Barbara reliquary were brought by canon Jacobus Garrer; the source of the relics in the St Lawrence reliquary is not recorded, but they were probably selected from the Cathedral's own collection.

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[653] *Jtem ith Marie billeth aff sølff mett ith lidith monstrandz aff sølff*, DN 13: 569.
[654] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 106.
[655] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 106.
[656] Wangsgaard Jürgensen 2018, 17–18.
[657] See Wolf 2000, 48.

Thelma Jexlev has observed a parallel logic in the "new" reliquary image of Mary Magdalene in the list of the church of Our Lady in Copenhagen: the low position of the Magdalene relic in its list of contents implies that the reliquary was not made in her image because of the relic, but rather to adorn the altar of Mary Magdalene.[658] If this hypothesis holds for the other reliquaries as well, it could indicate their connections to specific altars; indeed, several reliquaries in the Danish lists seem to lack a strong connection between the shape or illustration and contents. However, even if this logic applies to some reliquaries, it cannot be applied to all of them; the same list of the church of Our Lady includes seven reliquary images in which some of the relics related to the represented saint are prominent, including an "old" image of Mary Magdalene, which contained a "notable part" of her relics, mentioned as the first item of its contents.[659]

Apart from the sizes, few other details are registered about the lost reliquary sculptures. Some were listed with one or two details: of the three silver Virgin Mary reliquaries in the church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, one included a round crystal, and another was gilt and footed.[660] The Virgin "*circa bajulationem*", containing a relic of her milk, in the Franciscan Abbey in Copenhagen[661] must have been more expressive or had more of a narrative than the average reliquary image, as it was the mourning Virgin, or the Virgin with a burden – possibly a *pietá*.

The documented reliquary sculptures represent both local and international saints; many Nordic churches had a sculpture of their patron saint. The Virgin Mary and her mother St Anne are among the most popular figures in various kinds of religious images throughout the Middle Ages. Other popular figures among Nordic sculptural reliquaries were Mary Magdalene and St Lawrence – usually

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[658] Jexlev 1976, 38.

[659] SRD VIII, 260–268; Liebgott 1982, 118–128.

[660] SRD VIII, 265: *Noua ymago beatae virginis deaurata, praeter pedem*. The last two words, "except for the foot" or "without the foot" could be interpreted to mean that the foot was missing or, as Liebgott reads it, that it was gilt except for the foot. Liebgott 1981, 125.

[661] SRD VIII, 289.

containing their respective relics among those of others.[662] The reliquaries are described with few words, but their noble or royal donors have often been carefully registered. In the case of the only existing reliquary sculpture, it seems that the donor had purchased the piece in Germany and had his name inscribed on it. One may ask whether the names of some of the donors of the lost reliquary statuettes were remembered for the same reasons: perhaps those reliquaries were also marked with inscriptions commemorating the donation.

### 6.2 Secondary Reliquaries – Wooden Sculptures

Part One of this study will end with a brief terminological discussion. I suggest a division of the objects containing relics into two groups: (i) primary reliquaries, made for the purpose of containing, protecting and representing relics, and (ii) secondary reliquaries, meaning sculptures or other objects complemented with relics. The term "secondary reliquary" should not be confused with "secondary relic", and its relation to "primary" reliquaries is not directly comparable to the relation between primary and secondary relics.

The relation between reliquaries and sculptural cult images has been discussed for a long time. The differences in their appearance and functions are not always evident: both were often adorned with gold and gems, embodying the material and visual presence of the saint, and were able to perform miracles. Even in "primary" reliquary sculptures, relics were not always visible. Jean-Claude Schmitt and Hans Belting, among others, have analysed the close and complex relation between image and relic, or image and reliquary, which in the case of sculptures are even more intermingled than in general. Certain sculptures were perceived as containing the presence of a saint as powerfully as if they had been relics themselves.[663] Generally, the art historical literature seems to tacitly reflect the division between explicit (or primary) reliquaries and secondary reliquaries when reliquary busts, even without any visible indication of their function or contents, are usually called reliquaries in catalogues, while full-

[662] SRD VIII, 261; 264; 266.

[663] Schmitt 1999, 145–159; Belting 1994, 299–303. For more on devotional sculptures as interactive agents, see also Räsänen 2010, 50–65.

body sculptures with a relic niche are catalogued as sculptures, and the presence of the relic is mentioned as a mere technical detail among others.[664] However, I believe the term 'secondary reliquaries' for referring to those latter objects, in comparison to items that are immediately and primarily recognisable as reliquaries, is useful for the discussion.

One of the main functions of a reliquary is to express the presence of relics, either by revealing them or explicitly referring to them by shape, inscription or illustration. Certain shapes are only typical of reliquaries, whereas other reliquaries share the shape or some visual elements with other genres of ecclesiastic objects (such as monstrances, pyxes, crosses, or sculptures). Monstrances and pyxes are usually either reliquaries or vessels for the host, but in sculptures the division is less simple. Sculptures with large, visible and decorative cavities or windows speak explicitly of their reliquary nature, while sculptures with hidden relic cavities would, in the typology suggested here, not be defined as reliquaries: the addition of a hidden relic would have been a conscious act to enhance the sculpture's saintly *virtus*, but not to make the sculpture into a reliquary, as that would entail making the relic's presence known by visual means.

A tentative gradation could be established on the basis of the shape, place, and visibility of the niche, and the way they are designed to be opened and closed.[665] Their locations depend on symbolic, stylistic, practical, and traditional reasons; in Nordic sculptures, relic niches, visible or invisible, have been placed in the head, foot, side, or chest.[666] Another place for relics would be in the base of a sculpture, partly visible through a lattice or quatrefoil-type window, reminiscent of the predellas of altarpieces. Those niches are not always in visible places such as on the front side of the sculpture, but the shape and closing system indicate that the intention was to

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[664] Meyer 1950, 55–66; Kunz 2014, 276; 327–329; 379–384. For a recent contribution and references to earlier interpretations, see e.g. Vanhauwaert & Geml 2016, 104–124; on Nordic sculptures with relics, see Liepe 2014 and below.

[665] On the opening and closing, see e.g. Forsyth 1972, 37.

[666] Lindberg 1998, 50; 53; Tångeberg 2005, 251–253; Nordman 1964, 247; Liepe 2014, 39–50.

access and display the relics during celebrations. In these cases, I argue that their reliquary status was secondary, but not incidental. As a result of this easy access, the niches have often lost both the lid and their contents.

The interiors of wooden sculptures can also be hollow for purely technical reasons: small cavities in the back or on the top of the head often originate in the carving process as a solution to avoid the wood eventually breaking. In some cases, relics have been inserted in those cavities; their presence is significant, but incidental and often ignored. Extant written sources do not reveal to what extent medieval audiences were conscious of hidden relics in those sculptures, but a twelfth-century account by Hugh of Poitiers implies that they did not always know. A hidden niche with various relics was found – to the surprise of the community – in the back of a Virgin Mary that had survived a fire in the church.[667] Contemporary audiences are certainly not aware of the presence of relics if the cavity is closed and painted over. The only way the relic's existence becomes known is through scientific examination – or if the sculpture is broken by accident. Recent research has shown that there are probably more hidden relics inside Nordic medieval sculptures than previously thought.[668]

Nordic wooden sculptures with relics have recently been discussed by Lena Liepe, who underlines the importance of the presence of relics and argues that they must have played a central role in the consciousness of the local community.[669] The majority of Nordic sculptures containing (or assumed to contain) relic niches are related to the Virgin Mary. This is the case internationally, too: particularly the enthroned Virgin sculptures of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries often have a square niche in the back.[670] An example of these is the Gothic (probably French) Virgin Mary of Lemland church in Åland (see image 32). Images of the Crucified – often large triumphal crucifixes – have also contained relics. Generally in Europe the niches for them have been round or oval and covered

[667] Freedberg 1989, 94–98.
[668] Liepe 2014, 45. For more on recent discoveries in Finnish medieval sculpture, see Vuola et al. 2018, 43–66.
[669] Liepe 2014, 39–50.
[670] Belting 1994, 302; Freedberg 1989, 93–98.

with crystal – often placed in the chest as if evoking one of the side wounds.[671] In some Nordic examples, the niche is now empty and missing the crystal.[672]

Large crucifixes with relics hidden inside the head seem to be relatively common in the area of medieval Denmark. One famous example is the triumphal crucifix at Roskilde Cathedral, which had a small reliquary cross inside the head of Christ, containing a fragment of the Holy Cross. The cathedral sold some of its old treasures in 1806, and the new owner of the triumphal crucifix intended to chop it up for burning, but when the head was chopped in two, a bundle of silk fell out containing a Byzantine golden reliquary cross decorated with pearls and gems. The triumphal crucifix was destroyed – apparently a French piece from around 1220 – but a part of the head, a small relief, and the reliquary itself are preserved at the Danish National Museum.[673] Unlike the Roskilde cross, however, most of the relics found in the invisible cavities in other crucifixes are only wrapped in lead or cloth.[674] The relic inside the head of the fourteenth-century triumphal crucifix in Vester Nebel church that was found during restoration in 1954, proves that relics related to Christ were not obligatory, as it was a rib fragment of one of the 11,000 Virgins.[675] In the sixteenth-century triumphal crucifix from Torsken Church in Norway (recently studied by Lena Liepe) two niches were found – one in a rather invisible spot under the chin of Christ and the other in the chest. The chest niche was empty, but in the one under the chin – perhaps improvised in order to hide relics during the Reformation – a relic of the Holy Cross had survived.[676]

A different arrangement can be seen in Stockholm Cathedral, where a wooden sculpture of St George represents him carrying a pendant with four compartments for relics. Originally they were

[671] There were also alternative practices where the host was inserted instead. A sculpture of the dead Christ at the Abbey of Descalzas Reales in Madrid has a round glass window in the place of the wound in his side – the host has been served from that niche in the Easter Friday procession. See Didi-Huberman 2007, 52.
[672] DK, Sorø, 545; Liepe 1995b, 298; Liepe 2014, 42-44.
[673] Nyborg 2003, 160–195; see also DK, Roskilde, 1636–1637.
[674] Liepe 2014, 41–44.
[675] Liebgott 1982, 106–108; DNM, inv. nr. D96/1954.
[676] Hauglid 1948, 63–68; Liepe 2015b, 261–274.

covered by a glass pane and were thus visible, but in the eighteenth century both the relics and glass were removed and replaced by a new wooden lid. Two of the relics, and their consecration documents, were accidentally found in the cathedral archives by the author August Strindberg, who took them to the Royal Library for safekeeping. In 1954, they were placed back inside the sculpture.[677] St George's pendant is a curious example of two modes of representation: it is the sculpted rendering of a reliquary worn by a sculpted saint – but it is, simultaneously, a real reliquary, consecrated by the visible relics inside. As Peter Tångeberg has remarked, the sculpture group itself is transformed into a reliquary as its realistic details in monumental proportions are covered in the stuff of reliquaries – gold and gems.[678]

The recognition of relic niches is often difficult, but it might also be in the eye of the beholder. When looking at Finnish sculpture in the 1960s, art historian and archaeologist C. A. Nordman often seems blind to them, whereas Sigrid Nikula in the 1970s sees several reliquaries in the same material.[679] The task can be further complicated by later interventions, when the previous relic niches are repurposed. For instance, an unknown object was attached to the head of a Gothic St Olaf in Uusikirkko Church, and a holder for a baptismal bowl was attached to the niche in the chest of a fifteenth-century Virgin Mary from the Korpo Church in the Finnish archipelago.[680] Relics were also inserted in altarpieces and in the frames of devotional paintings.

Art historian David Freedberg has asked whether inserted relics are the necessary factor that makes an image "work". The above-mentioned account of Hugh of Poitiers seems to touch on exactly that question – was the image's cult status and reputation still due to the relics even if they were forgotten?[681] In any case, the placing of relics inside sculptures did not seem a familiar practice to the people of twelfth-century Poitiers, but the Virgin was clearly venerated and

[677] Svanberg & Qvarnström 1998, 199.
[678] Tångeberg 2009b, 129. On the materiality and materials of the St. George group, see also Liepe 2013, 198–207.
[679] Nordman 1964, 407; Nikula 1973, 74; Räsänen 2009, 68–69; 176.
[680] Nordman 1964, 247–248; Nikula 1973, 44–45; on relic niches, see also Freedberg 1989, 110–120.
[681] Freedberg 1989, 94–98.

valued as such. Ilene H. Forsyth, who has analysed French Romanesque Madonnas with relics or relic niches, underlines that the function of a reliquary was by no means essential for these sculptures.[682] Freedberg and Belting have also concluded that the miraculousness of holy images does not depend on the insertion of a relic, but the holiness of the images was certainly enhanced by the relics even after the images had gained an independent cult status.[683] Sacredness of reliquaries is explicitly based on the relic-based *virtus* inserted in the saint, whereas the sacredness of images is not. While holy images speak to the viewer through their shape and human face, most reliquaries function with a more abstract expression of sacredness that is not based on image. Even sculptural or figural reliquaries, made by the same skilful artisans, have less need to deliver a narrative or likeness.[684]

Finally, it must be noted that because the *virtus* of relics also works by contact and contagion, all images or objects that have contained relics can be seen as having thereby become relics themselves. This was already touched upon earlier concerning the uses of old reliquaries after new ones had been acquired. According to a theory proposed by art historian Steven Hooper, even images of saints themselves could be defined as relics by equivalence;[685] this definition corresponds, in my opinion, with the medieval veneration certain images received, independently of whether or not they contained inserted relics.

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Sculptures of saints in silver or gold are mentioned in several medieval documents; some of them are defined as reliquaries and their contents are listed, while others come without any reference to relics but have often been interpreted as reliquaries, too. These sculptures often represent local saints and patrons of the respective

[682] Forsyth 1972, 31–38; 67–86 and *passim*; on relics inside holy images, see also Belting 1994, 299–303.
[683] Belting 1994, 308; 346; Freedberg 1989, 93–98.
[684] Schmitt 1999, 145–159.
[685] Hooper 2014, 196–197.

churches or altars; this connection seems to have been more important than the relation to the relics within, as those did not necessarily represent the same saint. They have been donated by kings and members of nobility on various occasions, and at least in one case, the donor had his name inscribed on the podium of the reliquary. Relics have also been found inside wooden sculptures of saints, both in visible and hidden niches; some of the contagious *virtus* of relics would extend to the sculpture even if they were invisible. In this chapter, I suggested the term 'secondary reliquary' for those not explicitly made for the purpose of protecting and promoting the relics.

# II
# BODY-PART RELIQUARIES

As we have seen above, the majority of relics consist of body-parts, fragments of bone or flesh, if not entire bodies. Reliquaries have not only been shaped to accommodate them, but also to illustrate their contents or refer to them in various ways. The dimensions of an oblong casket may indicate the size of a holy body, or an oval pyx may have the suitable proportions for a head, for instance; while the iconography carved, embroidered, sculpted or painted on them may depict the *martyrium* of a saint. Meanwhile transparent crystal or glass windows or lattices reveal their contents, and an inscription might make the case even clearer. I will now focus on those reliquaries that are shaped to represent certain body-parts. Previously known as "speaking reliquaries", they are nowadays referred to as body-part reliquaries. Sometimes the shape is not a direct reference to the contents, and so the relation between shape and contents is one of the themes discussed in Part II.

The concept of body-part reliquaries may at first seem tautological, as most of them are containers for body parts. However, although any body part can become a relic, only few body parts are represented in the shapes of body-part reliquaries: most are shaped as heads, hands, or feet. Rare examples of reliquaries shaped as a mandible or rib are known, but I have not found these in the Nordic material.[686] The reliquary could be seen as the "new body" of a saint, entirely present in a new hand, for example, because the body of a saint, in the medieval Catholic view, is independently represented by each of its parts (*pars pro toto*).[687]

During the last few decades, body-part reliquaries have fascinated researchers of visual culture because they are the ones that most visually capture corporeal aspects of the cult of saints – including the practice of fragmenting the bodies of saints. The theme of the fragmented body recurs for various reasons in different periods. In

[686] For a tenth-century mandible reliquary of an unknown saint in Maaseik, Belgium, see http://balat.kikirpa.be/object/66647 (cited 9.12.2016).
[687] See e.g. Bynum 2011, 208–216; see also Lahti 2014.

medieval imagery, the theme appears both in decorated reliquaries and cruel *martyrium* scenes, whereas isolated body parts resonate differently in the modern views of the body, ranging from documentary images of war injuries to the aesthetics of fashion.[688] This macabre, yet luxurious visual aspect, combined with the cultic content of body-part reliquaries has made it difficult for art historians, as Barbara Boehm has pointed out, to approach them from a purely aesthetic point of view.[689] They are seen not so much as works of art, but as exotic or suspiciously irrational in some way. However, in the medieval context, body-part reliquaries were not seen as the macabre representations of dismembered bodies. Instead, what mattered was the presence of the saint even in a tiny fragment of his or her body.

Joseph Braun's work, *Die Reliquiare* (1940), is a cornerstone in the study of body-part reliquaries (as much as other reliquary types). The term 'speaking reliquary', from the German *redende*, has been in use since Braun's times – it was based on the assumption that the shapes of body-part reliquaries were direct reflections of their contents. In the 1990s, Hahn, Legner and other art historians criticised the term as being somewhat narrow and misleading and suggested alternatives like "shaped reliquaries" or "body-part reliquaries". Their arguments were based on new interpretations and observations on the functions of such reliquaries and on the complex relationship between their shape, contents, and cultic functions.[690] For instance, a reliquary in the shape of a hand should not necessarily imply that it contains a hand or fragment of hand, as previously assumed, so in that respect it cannot be claimed to "speak" about its contents – its messages are different.

Even if the relic is sacred and valuable, the reliquary plays a central role in its reception as such. The reasons for choosing a body-part reliquary over another shape for certain relics (or church) are still largely unanalysed. It seems, however, that one important criterion

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[688] For more on the theme of the fragmented body, see Bynum & Gerson 1997; Bynum 1991; Caviness 2001; Nochlin 1994. In Finnish, the questions of the macabre and the body are discussed in the anthology *Makaaberi ruumis*, 2009 (ed. Jari Eilola).

[689] Boehm 1997, 8–19.

[690] Legner 1995, 257–259; Bynum & Gerson 1997, 4; Hahn 1997a, 20–31; Boehm 1997, 17.

may be their ability to "speak" – not in the previously suggested sense of visualizing their contents, but in the sense of communicating with their audiences via the reliquary's "gaze" and gestures – speaking the language of living faces and hands. They incorporate the essential functions of hands or heads, while simultaneously representing the entire body. As art historian Madeline H. Caviness writes, of certain bust reliquaries, "it is as if all the severed parts are concentrated into this site of the intellect and soul."[691] Arm reliquaries were used to perform blessings, and head reliquaries invited eye contact with the viewer. Metal reliquary busts, in particular, often had a "penetrating" stare and a "disturbing" presence, as Caviness and Camille have commented.[692] Wooden busts, on the other hand, are less intimidating and usually have a rather friendly face, painted with relatively life-like colours.

Many of the most famous medieval reliquaries had the shape of a head or bust, and they were also the closest to portraits. From the 13th century, goldsmiths and sculptors working in wood were skilfully rendering realistic facial features to such an extent that it seems that, for example, St Donato is recognisable in two different Tuscan fourteenth-century reliquary busts, although made by two different goldsmiths. In one the saint is portrayed as young, and in the other he is old.[693] Due to this portrait potential, head reliquaries have received art historical attention for a number of decades over their role in the development of medieval sculpture. Both Ilene Forsyth, from the medieval sculpture perspective, and Cynthia Hahn, from that of reliquaries, have concluded there is no immediate effect, as the development of monumental sculpture had already begun before body-part reliquaries became widespread.[694] However, the two developments were parallel to each other. Body-part reliquaries and other sculptural reliquary shapes became increasingly popular from

[691] Caviness 2001, 163.

[692] Caviness 2001, 163; Camille 1991, 275–276. Caviness refers to the head reliquary of St Foy of Conques, and the half-body bust of St Agatha in Catania. The "speaking" capacities of Nordic reliquaries are discussed further below. One senses a fascination with the macabre, as variously noted by Boehm, Caviness and Camille.

[693] See White 1993 (1966), 597–599.

[694] Forsyth 1972, 31, 67–86; Hahn 1997, 20.

the 12th century onwards, while the oldest known examples were already being made in the late 9th century. Martina Bagnoli has suggested that the growing popularity of body-part reliquaries might have been due to the improved quality of sculpture and a sign of a growing appreciation for the sculptors' skills in "revealing God's presence".[695] Bruno Reudenbach accurately notes that striking level of anatomical realism or naturalism in body-part reliquaries, contradicted often with the lifelessness of shining metals and jewels, expressed the dual existence of the saints in their eternally living heavenly state and their fragmented, dead, yet incorruptible body.[696]

Body-part reliquaries are remarkably scarce in Nordic countries today. Indications of over fifty medieval head reliquaries and over thirty arm reliquaries can be found in the written sources, but only three heads and four arms survive. There are no examples of foot reliquaries known of in Nordic countries.[697] The majority of head and arm reliquaries that have been preserved – in the North as elsewhere – are from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[698] The materials used for body-part reliquaries are largely the same as for other reliquaries: valuable metals, wood, or a combination of both; but there are also textile examples. All these materials are represented among the existing body-part reliquaries in Nordic churches and museums. All the arm reliquaries that remain are made of wood and/or silver, while the head reliquaries are made of wood and textile. Lost reliquaries mentioned in the medieval documents were mostly made of metal, or in some cases, the material is not named at all.

Body-parts and the body are a recurring theme in the interaction between laypeople and the saints. More often than not, saints were asked to cure illnesses – both physical and mental. Gratitude was expressed with gifts brought to the shrine of the helping saint, and these votives or *ex-votos* often took the shape of the healed body-part, thus they representing a far larger variety of body parts than the reliquaries. The amount of votives and candles around a shrine were signs of its popularity and power, guiding the interests and behaviour

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[695] Bagnoli 2011, 145.

[696] Reudenbach 2008, 95–106; see also Junghans 2002, 76.

[697] European foot reliquaries are reoroduced in Braun 1940, 381–382.

[698] Braun 1940, 380–386; Bynum & Gerson 1997, 20.

of visitors and possibly contributing to the saint's reputation for helping with certain kinds of trouble.[699]

A number of Nordic body-part votives are still preserved, such as wooden arms and legs from Norway.[700] In hagiographic literature, the prevailing votive materials were more expensive – wax and silver – probably because the authors wanted to encourage visitors to bring valuable gifts. According to her miracle collection, Katarina of Vadstena's tomb was adorned by votives brought by grateful believers: there were male and female figures, eyes, heads, jaws, shinbones, feet, hands, and arms made of wax,[701] and an eye, a pair of breasts and a figure of silver.[702] Similar body-part votives were suspended on St Birgitta's tomb, too,[703] becoming eloquent details of its visual message. Limb-shaped wax votives also feature in a painting on the Sture altarpiece in Västerås Cathedral, but in this image, the votives are not attached to the tomb or altar, but high up on the wall near the ceiling.

After the Reformation, independent body parts were no longer desired visual elements in the Nordic churches, but they were still seen in medieval wall paintings, heraldic contexts, or in a new genre of body-part item: life-sized arm-shaped wooden candle-holders sticking out from church walls – not unlike the wooden or metallic reliquary arms seen previously in Nordic churches.

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[699] Hahn 1997b, 1083–1084; Freedberg 1989, 120–160; Rex 1993, 81–86. For more on the Nordic votive tradition, see also Kuuliala 2014, 55–58.

[700] For Nordic body-part votives, see e.g. Fett 1909, 145; see also Krötzl 1994, 215.

[701] Male figures: *vnius viri ymagine(m) de cera formatam; vnius pueri ymagine; female figures: vnam ymaginem muliebrem de cera formatam; vnius puelle ymaginem de cera formatam; eyes: duos oculos cereos; a head: vnum caput cereum; jaws: duas mandibulas de cera formatas; a shin-bone: vnam tibiam ceream; a foot: vnius pedis de cera formati; a hand: vnam manum ceream; an arm: similitudine vnius brachi de cera formandj.* Processus, 9; 81–83; 86–89; 91; 95; 100; 101; 109; 112; 116–118; 120; 123; 163–165; 168–170; 178; 195.

[702] *vno oculo de argento formato ; duas mamillas argenteas ; ymaginem argenteam*. Processus, 193; 99; 170.

[703] An example of a silver arm suspended "in front of the relics of Lady Birgitta" as a votive gift for healing the pain in the donor's arm: *Ceterum mittimus vobis quoddam brachium argenteum ex voto propter dolorem, quem in brachio nostro dextro habuimus, factum ad honorem Dei et laudem / ante reliquias domine Birgitte, cuius interuenientibus meritis sanitatem recepimus, appendendum,* SDHK 10799.

The aim of Part III is to get an overall picture of body-part reliquaries in the North, based on all the various fragments of visual or textual information that remain. Lost and existing arm reliquaries are inspected first, followed by lost and existing head reliquaries. Each item will be observed from a new perspective as regards their origin, identity, or history – depending on the character of the available fragments of information.

## 7 – Arm Reliquaries

In the Nordic countries, hand or arm reliquaries appear to have been slightly less common than the head-shaped ones, judging from the surviving documentation. Elsewhere in Europe, however, they are the most common type of preserved body-part reliquary.[704] This may be related to the ritual significance of the hand in church ceremonies – blessing, healing, and making the sign of the cross.[705] Arm reliquaries were also used to perform these same acts as "dispensers" of divine power. The relics inside arm reliquaries confirm this, as they were usually but not always arm relics.[706] In Hahn's view, two of the most common hand gestures in arm reliquaries – the fingers bent in the blessing position and the open hand – refer to making the sign of the cross.[707]

Apart from relics and reliquaries, the arm and hand have several other contexts and meanings in Christian iconography. The Latin for arm (*brachium*) is often associated with power in the Bible,[708] and the association between hand (*manus*) and power is a feature inherited from several pre-Christian cultures. In Roman law, for instance, the term *manus* signified power. God's hand is often the only part of him that we see depicted in art – representing the visual symbol of his power and actions in paintings, mosaics, and illustrated manuscripts.[709] It is sometimes pointing, sometimes blessing, and

[704] Hahn 1997a, 21.
[705] Sigal 1985, 26.
[706] Snoek 1995, 297–299; Hahn 1997a, 22–27.
[707] Hahn 1997a, 23.
[708] Ainonen 2008, 23–24.
[709] Schmitt 1990, 84; 77–115.

sometimes open, and these are also the most common gestures among arm reliquaries. Like God's hand, reliquary hands (and heads) were not seen by the medieval Church as being separate from the body, but as metonymic representations of the whole body's presence.

In Nordic confiscation lists and other documents, arm reliquaries are listed in the local languages as "arm" or "hand", or in Latin as "*brachium*" or "*manus*", corresponding to the terminology used in other medieval European documents. The word *brachium* first appears in twelfth-century documents meaning 'arm relic', but from the 14th century, it was used for arm reliquaries as well.[710] In most cases, the above terms refer to a reliquary representing a whole arm that includes the hand. Reliquaries in the form of a hand cut at the wrist, however, are rare. Some items listed as "hands" appear in Nordic confiscation lists, but they are not preserved. Arm reliquaries without hands also exist, although in most cases these originally had a hand – such as the so-called St Olaf's arm, which will be discussed in this chapter.[711]

In this chapter, I discuss the four medieval arm reliquaries still existing in the Nordic countries. Two are at the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm, and the two others at the Danish National Museum in Copenhagen. Due to the scarceness of sources, each of them is able to give answers to different questions, but together they contribute to our understanding of the cult of relics in the region. Apart from presenting what can be known of the material history of each arm, I intend to show how each can be seen as an example of a different function or aspect of arm reliquaries in general. None of the four reliquaries is mentioned in any of the preserved medieval written sources, and all the arm reliquaries mentioned in medieval documents are lost. In two cases, arm reliquaries of the same saints are mentioned in written documents, but there is no certain indication the existing reliquaries should be the same ones.

Before moving on to the four existing arms, however, I begin by investigating the lost Nordic arm reliquaries only known from the

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[710] Braun 1940, 61–63. -A derivative of this, *brachiale*, was also used by nineteenth-century art historians, but it would not have been known in the Middle Ages, and Braun judges it as "meaningless".

[711] For Olaf's arm and another handless reliquary arm, see Braun 1940, tafel 120.

written sources and discussing the possible interpretations of those sources.

### 7.1 Lost Arms: Nordic Arm Reliquaries in Medieval Documents

In general, references to arm reliquaries in medieval written documents leave plenty of room for interpretation, so it is not possible to reconstruct lost reliquaries in any specific detail. Usually the main relics, the material, or some decorative details are written down, but sometimes there is only the slightest trace of the object's existence. In the following pages, I examine just what exactly can be gleaned from these fragments, beginning with those arm reliquaries that have no name, then moving on to those which do have one.

Anatomically, we can divide the references to such reliquaries into two groups that go beyond whether they have a name or not: those reliquaries referred to as "arm" (*brachium*) or "hand" (*manus*). Both terms seem to refer to the same kind of reliquary, shaped like an arm with a hand, but as the items are no longer preserved, it is impossible to say whether *manus* and *brachium* could be used interchangeably in every case. In Southern and Central European inventories, the difference is clearer when the same list includes both terms, although even there it is possible that they were used somewhat arbitrarily.[712] One Nordic inventory includes such a distinction as well: the fifteenth-century list of relics in Lund Cathedral mentions St Canute's "golden arm" and St Birgitta's "golden hand".[713] Since both objects are now lost and no other description of them exists, the meaning for this choice of terms remains unknown. As reliquaries originally shaped like a hand without an arm and vice versa are relatively rare in Europe, I will tentatively assume that most Nordic examples are of the type containing both parts, though bearing in mind that this cannot be taken for granted.

#### Anonymous Arms

The majority of hand or arm reliquaries mentioned in Nordic documents are anonymous. The reason may simply be because the author of the list, or bailiff confiscating the items, did not know their

[712] Braun 1940, 61–63; 383–384.
[713] SRD VIII, 448–449.

cult identity. Not all of them had the name of the saint visibly written on the surface, nor was there a visible *authentica*. The bailiffs may also not have paid attention to the difference between reliquaries and votives – some items simply listed as "silver arm" could also have been hand- or arm-shaped votives of silver, which however would have characteristically weighed less. At least details such as gems or ornaments would probably have prompted the bailiffs to recognise the items as reliquaries, considering that the design of votives was usually rather simple.

Most of the confiscated silver arms were from cathedrals or abbeys, but some seem to have been from parish churches too. As an arm reliquary could play a significant role in the liturgy, we can assume that it was chosen to represent a locally significant saint. This assumption can be used as a basis for hypotheses regarding the identity of these anonymous arms – even if they can only remain unconfirmed. Af Ugglas, for instance, has suggested that an arm reliquary decorated with gems and confiscated from the Dominican Abbey in Skänninge might have been made for a relic of the local saint, Ingrid of Skänninge. If that were the case, he goes on to suggest, it would not have belonged to the Dominican monks, but to the nuns of the convent founded by Ingrid.[714] However, if the place of confiscation is taken as correct information, the arm could equally well have represented the monastery's patron, St Olaf.

Two anonymous arm or hand reliquaries were confiscated from Växjö Cathedral: one was a gilt hand with a large gilt foot surrounded by small gilt images; and the other seems to have been more modest – a "white arm without foot".[715] The word "white" is ambiguous: in some cases it has been interpreted to mean silver, in others to mean ivory.[716] An arm reliquary made of ivory is unlikely though, seeing as those are neither found among the surviving, nor among the explicitly documented lost reliquaries. A possible saint for the larger arm is St Sigfrid, whose full-body reliquary was kept in the Cathedral until as late as the 17th century – as mentioned earlier, richly decorated arm

[714] Källström 1939, 246; cf. Af Ugglas 1935, 24. (weight 4,5 lmk)
[715] Källström 1939, 301: "*Een förgyltt handh medh Een stor förgyltt foot, och små förgylthe belätter omkring*"; "*Een huit arm wthan foot*".
[716] Källström 1939, 118–119; 169.

reliquaries often represented the hands of local saint bishops. The smaller arm might have been a votive, as those usually have no foot or base, but this might also imply that the object – perhaps reliquary, after all – had actually just lost the foot it would normally have had. The notion of a missing or detachable foot for an arm reliquary also appears in a list from Roskilde, and this is discussed further on here in the context of the Mary Magdalene arm reliquary in Roskilde.

Vestervig Abbey had two silver arms, and probably one or both represented the local patron saint – St Thøger (Theodgar) who had been a missionary.[717] St Thøger's legend pays no particular attention his hands, but instead to the relic of his leg bone,[718] which does not exclude the possibility that it was placed in an arm-shaped reliquary. As many medieval examples show, the meaning and value of arm reliquaries (or reliquaries of any shape) was not dependent on the type of relics placed within.

Naantali (Nådendal / Vallis gratiae) Abbey lost an anonymous arm of silver in the confiscations, as did Mora Church.[719] For the Birgittines of Naantali, the most precious reliquary arm would have been that of St Birgitta; in Mora, the patron saint, the Archangel Michael, could hardly have been present in the form of a hand relic, but in principle, a reliquary could have represented his hand while containing the relic of a different saint. Likewise, the silver hand in Ribe Cathedral[720] is unlikely to have represented the Virgin Mary, although the Cathedral was dedicated to her. Another hand, with no extra details, but probably made of silver, was confiscated in Västerfärnebo.[721] From Stockholm, two gilt fingers were even confiscated that could have been votives, or parts of a broken hand/arm reliquary – or finger-shaped reliquaries, as these are known to have existed in Central Europe.[722]

Names are sometimes omitted even in documents issued by people for whom saints and relics were obviously important. A passage in a

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[717] Af Ugglas 1935, 23–24; Källström 1939, 297; Hald 1909.
[718] Danske helgeners levned II, 336–337.
[719] Källström 1939, 319; 222.
[720] Ribe Oldemoder, 116.
[721] Källström 1939, 294.
[722] Källström 1939, 256; Braun 1940, 384–386, tafel 118.

Swedish episcopal chronicle has been interpreted to mean that Bishop Bengt (Benedict) of Skara, in the 12th century, commissioned a "holy hand" – or, according to an alternative translation, "the saint's hand" to be made – and relics were then placed inside it.[723] The document shows that the hand and its contents were well known by the time the document was written, but currently there are no other sources to shed more light on the case. In a parallel case from the early 14th century, Bergen's Apostelkirke seems to have received two silver arm reliquaries specifically commissioned for it, as these are included in King Haakon V's will, in which he donates the silver "for making two hands that relics can be kept in".[724] Without any further information, Haakon's intention has two equally plausible interpretations: either that he had specific relics in mind for the hand-shaped reliquaries, or he just thought hand-shaped reliquaries would serve in another liturgical function or convey a visual message that he felt necessary at that time. Perhaps the king considered hand reliquaries the most prestigious kind. As stated earlier, a hand-shaped reliquary does not necessarily contain the relic of a hand, and perhaps it was their usefulness as "liturgical props" which made them the most desirable shape for a reliquary: a bishop could wield the hand of a saint to perform liturgical gestures with a higher power and authority than what the bishop alone would have had.[725]

When a reliquary is named after a saint, it implies that the main contents of the reliquary are those belonging to the saint in question, but there can be other relics there too. In some medieval documents, the contents of an arm or hand reliquary are revealed in detail, while in others, the reliquary is identified as the hand of one saint. There are also documents revealing the shape and contents of a reliquary, but not its name or attribution. When the contents of a nameless reliquary are listed, however, then we can make some deductions regarding the name. The silver hand in the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen contained unspecified relics of St Wilhelm the Abbot, St Christine, and

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[723] "*han lot göræ handinæ hælhu oc bo hanæ. oc læggiæ .i. hanæ hælhu domæ*". Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar. I: Westgötalagen, 306; 418; Pernler 2004, 79–80.

[724] "*pro duabus manibus faciendis, ad reliquias in eisdem reponendas*", DN IV:128. The will has no exact date, but it has been estimated as dating from the period 1312–1319.

[725] Hahn 1997a, 22.

others.[726] Although the naming of the abbot as the first saint contained in the reliquary is not an absolute proof of the reliquary's identity, it is an indication of likelihood. St Wilhelm being a Danish saint increases the probability, because the majority of arm and head reliquaries in Nordic countries were attributed to locally venerated saints.

According to a list dated to be from circa 1470, Lund Cathedral also had two "hands". Here, the anatomically specified contents can be used as additional clues. One of them was a gilt silver hand with the fingers of St Clement, the relics of St Lawrence, "and many others". The specified finger relics would suggest that Pope Clement I was the saint that would have been most likely to give his name to the reliquary. It would therefore have been known as "St Clement's arm", and one of the few body-part reliquaries primarily associated with a worldwide rather than local saint. The other silver hand, holding a pen, is the receptacle for a fragment of St Birgitta's finger, but also for a relic of Mary Magdalene.[727] Again, the finger relics are plausible main relics for a hand reliquary, and they were the first ones to be mentioned, but more essentially, as writing and literacy belonged essentially to St Birgitta's iconography, the hand represented by the reliquary was probably hers.

**Named Arms**

As the previous examples demonstrate, the division between anonymous and named reliquaries is not clear-cut. Even arms that are not directly named can reveal their identities in other ways. In the Lund reliquary list, one gilt silver reliquary is said to contain the upper part of St Canute's arm; exceptionally, it can be trusted to contain only that, as the same list mentions several relics inside most other reliquaries. The arm was holding a round sphere with a cross, or a *globus cruciger*, as the symbol of a ruler's power. It stood in a high position among the other reliquaries of the church, near the beginning of the list, which is suitable for the reliquary of a national king-saint

[726] DK, København, 37.

[727] Hildebrand 1903, 617–618; SRD VIII, 449: *"In manu argentea deaurata. Sunt ossa de digitis sancti clementis pape & martiris. Item de sancto laurencio martire. Et de aliis plurimis sanctis. / In manu argentea habente penam inter digitos. Est pars digiti sancta birgitte. Item de sancta maria Magdalena."*

who was also, as the list reminds us, the founder of Lund Cathedral.[728] The regal attribute makes it clear that St Canute's arm not only carried the saint's heavenly *virtus*, but also his earthly merits as a king. The reliquary, with its uncomplicated relation between shape, identity and content, was most likely known as "the arm of St Canute".

The fact that the saint's role as a king was highlighted with the regal symbol may be an indication of the reliquary's commissioner – a ruler that wished to strengthen his or her ties to Lund Cathedral; that could be Queen Margaret or her son, Eric of Pomerania. In fact, it is known that King Eric and his spouse Queen Philippa commissioned and donated another arm relic of St Canute, most likely also in an arm-shaped reliquary of gilt silver, to Vadstena Abbey in 1422.[729] It does not feature in the confiscation lists from Vadstena, and Källström therefore thinks it may have been hidden for safekeeping.[730] The other possibility is that it had already disappeared before the confiscations.

Vadstena Abbey may have had an arm reliquary of its own saint, St Birgitta, but there are no sources referring to it, although her arm reliquaries apparently existed at least in Linköping and Lund (and at S. Lorenzo in Panisperna in Rome). Instead, there seem to have been two arm reliquaries of her daughter, St Katarina, in the abbey. In his report of St Katarina's translation ceremony in 1489, the eyewitness Nils Ragnvaldsson simply reports that Katarina's arm bones were each placed in their own reliquaries provided for the purpose.[731] In a description of the same event in *Diarium Vadstenense*, the shape is explicitly confirmed, but the number isn't – the author writes that St Katarina's elbow was placed in a hand-shaped gilt silver reliquary.[732] The transfer of the bones into their shining containers brings to mind another transformation of her arms in the *vita* of St Katarina: due to her chosen poverty, the sleeves of her dress were old and worn-out,

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[728] SRD VIII, 448: *"In brachio deaurato in cuius manu est spera rotunda cum cruce. Est Lacertus brachii sancti kanuti Regis & martiris qui fundauit edificauit & dotauit ecclesiam metropolitanam lundensem."*

[729] DV 330: "*In dominica Letare misit nobis rex brachium sancti Kanuti regis in vase argenteo et deaurato, quod regina huc portavit*."

[730] Källström 1935, 19–20.

[731] "*huart beenet i sitt kar som ther til voro reedd*". Stora kyrkofesten för Sankta Katarina i Vadstena, 46–47.

[732] DV 884: 14. "*postremo ulnam brachii in forma manus argentea auro polita coaptavit.*"

but when she went out with noble ladies of Rome, her arms miraculously appeared to others as dressed in a precious blue and purple cloth.[733] Why this anecdote concentrates on her arms and sleeves instead of her entire dress is difficult to say, but when the vita was read and contemplated in Vadstena abbey, the sight of the actual shining arms must have resonated with the description.

Another arm reliquary of St Katarina perhaps existed in the Cistercian Abbey in Riseberga even earlier than those in Vadstena. The will of a local man, dating from April 1434, includes a silver spoon and some other silver items for the arm of St Catholica, "*tel sancta Catholice aarm*" in Riseberga.[734] The silver was probably intended for either making or repairing a silver arm reliquary. The name 'Catholica' is clearly a misspelling, as a saint by that name is not known. In the original document, the part "Cathol" is crossed out, which indicates that the scribe was already doubting the correctness of the name and was going to rewrite it. Names such as Cecilia or Catharina could have been intended. Katarina of Vadstena, whose cult was growing in Sweden at the time, is a plausible candidate: she must have been seen as one of Riseberga's "own" saints, having lived there in her youth. Her translation had not yet taken place, but the abbey might already have possessed a secondary relic of Katarina or have started the preparations for a reliquary in anticipation of the translation. Källström has associated the arm with a broken ivory reliquary with "silver nails", which was confiscated from Riseberga in the 16th century;[735] however, as stated above, it is not very likely considering the rarity of ivory arm reliquaries.

In Uppsala Cathedral, relics of St Eric were not only venerated in his large shrine, but also in a silver hand or arm. Like the arms of St Katarina in Vadstena, also the arm of St Eric is described in two documents that complement each other. The first of the two remaining sources that document its existence is a letter from Archbishop Birger Gregersson of Uppsala to the Cathedral provost, in 1367, that unceremoniously asks for the relics of St Eric's arm that

[733] SRS III:2, 154.
[734] Närkes medeltida urkunder, 109–111.
[735] Källström 1939, 235.

had been cut off by the canons, according to his instructions, when they were placing the arm inside "the silver hand".[736] To me, this implies that the translation of the arm relic into a new, hand-shaped silver reliquary was a recent event that the archbishop for some reason had not been able to attend; in these situations it was common to cut off tiny fragments that were given to the clerics or other guests of honor participating in the celebration, and the sacristan or the provost must have promised to put aside some small fragments to Birger Gregersson as well. Furthermore, the arm reliquary may well have been commissioned for the feast of translation of the body of St Eric to a new silver shrine, as suggested by Herman Bengtsson[737].

In fact, the reliquary was not the only silver arm discussed in the archishop's correspondence: in a letter probably addressed to the monks in Vadstena in the same year, he sent a silver votive hand to be placed in front of the relics of St Birgitta, who had healed his aching right arm.[738] Although the remaining information is insufficient to confirm a connection between these cases, one may ask whether the archbishop could not have been a major contributor in the commissioning of the reliquary arm of St Eric as well. In any case, he would certainly have been present in the celebration of the new reliquary in Uppsala unless there was a major obstacle. In fact, there was an obstacle in 1367: Birger Gregersson had travelled to Viterbo to receive Pope Urban V's confirmation of his new archiepiscopal position, which was given in July 1367[739].

The second document concerning the arm of St Eric is a brief miracle account, added between lines of a seventeenth-century chronicle describing the events of an attack by Danish troops on

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[736] *Item dicatur domino sacristano quod non negligat mittere nobis reliquias beati erici, quas, ut erudimus, canonici de brachio ipsius quando illud posuerunt intra(?) manum argenteam praeciderint […]* (transcription mine). SDHK 9037; on the reliquary, see also Lovén 2004, 19; Bengtsson 2010, 148.

[737] Bengtsson 2010, 136–137.

[738] SDHK 10799. The date and the addressees are unknown, but the year suggested by the Swedish national archives for both letters mentioning silver arms is 1376.

[739] Birger Gregersson, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/artikel/18237, *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon* (article by Sten Engström), accessed 3.7.2019. –The celebration in Uppsala may have taken place on the day commemorating Eric's death, May 18th.

Stockholm and Uppsala in 1518. While looting Uppsala Cathedral, a captain of the army tried to grab the arm of St Eric, but died on the spot.[740]

Another silver arm of St Eric, along with a small arm reliquary of St Henrik, was confiscated from Linköping Cathedral in 1529, but nothing indicates a connection between that and the one in Uppsala.[741] St Henrik's arm relics were possibly venerated in two arm-shaped silver reliquaries in Turku Cathedral, but those will be discussed later on together with his reliquary bust in the chapter on lost head reliquaries.

Again, it is necessary to remember that the possession of an arm relic does not necessarily mean that it was kept in an arm-shaped reliquary. Some documents specify the combination, others imply it, and in many cases it cannot be confirmed. The most precious relic in Stavanger Cathedral was the arm of St Swithun, its patron saint, kept in a reliquary on the main altar. That it was shaped like an arm is only a possibility though, albeit a plausible one, as there are no documents that mention the shape. A document from 1517 implies that all 22 relics of the cathedral, including the arm relic of the patron saint, were temporarily stored inside the reliquary of St Swithun; whether this could have been an arm reliquary naturally depends on the size of the relics.[742]

The reliquaries for the head and arm of St David, the local patron saint, were confiscated from Munktorp Church in 1542. In the document, this was registered as one reliquary enclosing both body-parts.[743] The shape is not indicated explicitly in the document, but as the confiscators in general had no interest for the contents of the reliquaries, the arm and head must have been visually prominent in order not to be overlooked in this case. Sculptural reliquaries

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[740] Added afterwards, in parenthesis: *dar was 1 kapteyn wollde Sante Ericus arm an gripen und bleff tor stunt doeth, miraculum*. Expeditio Danica adversus Holmiam anno 1518, SRS III:1, 31.

[741] Källström 1939, 117; 212. This was probably St Henrik of Turku; a different Bishop Henrik had a reputation of sanctity in Linkøping, but he apparently had no official cult and thus no reliquaries. See Lundén 1983, 430–435.

[742] DN 4:1074; Haug 2005, 32–39.

[743] Källström 1939, 117; 222.

representing both a head and and arm are not common, which is why two separate reliquaries would be more likely. (The possible head or bust reliquary will be briefly discussed below in Chapter 8.) A "shrine of St David" was also confiscated from Munktorp.[744]

Västerås Cathedral also had to surrender two silver arms to the confiscators, who did not write down the saints they were dedicated to.[745] They might have been to St David as well, as there were efforts to develop his cult in Västerås in the 15th century.[746] This might also be related to the acquisition of the arm and head reliquaries in Munktorp: if the saint's body was really taken from Munktorp to Västerås, one might reasonably ask whether some kind of compensation was demanded or granted to Munktorp. Sculptural reliquaries of gold or silver were expensive investments; on the other hand, impressive reliquaries would have been an efficient way of securing the continued interest of local pilgrims in the remaining relics. After all, if properly displayed, the head and the hand would have been able to represent the saint's presence more intensely than a shrine with the rest of his relics.

If an arm reliquary of St David did exist in Munktorp or Västerås, one detail could be assumed: I believe it would have been portrayed wearing a glove, which was known to be his personal attribute. The arm reliquaries of sanctified bishops often have episcopal gloves, but in the case of David, a glove would also have been a suitable reference to his legend, according to which he was holy to such an extent that he could hang his gloves on the rays of sun that entered the church through its windows.[747] In Swedish runic calendars, the day of St David is also marked with the image of a glove.[748] As the glove in his iconography and legend underline the importance of St David's hands in his cult, a plausible choice would have been to encase his hand in a reliquary shaped to confirm it. Another sign of the importance given

[744] Källström 1939, 116; 296–298.
[745] Källström 1939, 297.
[746] Odenius 1962, 33–37; see also above in the chapter on shrines.
[747] Grau 1754, 367–368; Odenius 1962, 26–40.
[748] Brilioth 1924.

to St David's hands is that an arm reliquary of St David also existed in Eskilstuna.[749]

Even when an object is mentioned in several documents, with different wordings that might complement each other to form a more detailed picture of the lost object, the picture often remains obscure. Roskilde Cathedral had a relic of St Mary Magdalene's hand that belonged to the royal family, but it was permanently deposited on the main altar next to the head reliquary of St Lucius – the Cathedral's patron saint.[750] The reliquary for the hand is mentioned in several medieval documents, but none of them specifies its shape. A hand shape does seem likely though, as the item is referred to as "St Mary Magdalene's hand" (*Sancte Marie Magdalene hand*).[751] As Braun has demonstrated, hand- and head-shaped reliquaries were often simply referred to as the hand or head of a certain saint.[752] In three different relic or reliquary lists, it is named in three slightly different ways: "a monstrance of Magdalene's hand"; a "monstrance which contained Magdalene's hand"; and "a reliquary of Magdalene's hand without its foot".[753] It was made of gilt silver and had two large crystal windows, framed with silver and gems – probably placed on two opposite sides, so the relic was visible from both the front and back. The windows explain why the reliquary was called a monstrance, but they might also indicate that the hand relic was actually placed in a monstrance, rather than a hand-shaped reliquary. The foot was probably large and detachable – in one sixteenth-century list, the foot and crystals are mentioned separately – and these were probably left when the gilt silver parts were confiscated.[754]

An arm-shaped reliquary with a large, detachable base is not typical, but not impossible, either. If the reliquary of Mary Magdalene's hand in Roskilde was not a hand-shaped reliquary with a window, it could have also been a monstrance topped with a

[749] Källström 1939, 169.
[750] Petersen 1874, 415.
[751] Diplomatarium Christierni Primi, 39.
[752] Braun 1940, 64–65.
[753] "*Magdalenae hendes Monstrands*"; "*thet Monstrans Magdalenae hand stod uti*"; "*Reliquiarium manus Magdalenae praeter pedem*". DK, Roskilde, 1640.
[754] DK, Roskilde, 1668–1669.

hand[755], or even a non-figurative, symmetrical monstrance showing the entire hand relic. The detachable foot would facilitate the practice of carrying the reliquary in a procession and using it as a liturgical tool for blessing.

As we have seen, registered details of lost arm reliquaries may reveal aspects of their possible commissioners, saintly attributions, iconography, shapes, and practices related to them in the church. In the case of local saints, an arm reliquary often existed in the same church as the shrine containing the body of the saint, but other arms of the same saint could exist in other churches as well; this seems to be true of the arm reliquaries of the saints Katarina, Canute, Erik, Henrik, and possibly David. The purchase of an arm reliquary could be timed to coincide with a feast of translation of the body and thus contribute to the development of the cult, as was probably the case with the arm of St Erik in Uppsala, but the reasons for commissioning one could also be related to rulers' efforts at improving their reputation or strengthening their ties with the church, such as Eric of Pomerania's gift of the arm reliquary of St Canute to Vadstena and possibly also to Lund. For a hand reliquary to have a prominent role and place on the main altar, local background was not necessary, though, as proved by the reliquaries of Mary Magdalene and St Swithun.

### 7.2 An Arm for God: Saint Olaf's Arm?

The so-called Arm of St Olaf, a reliquary in the National Museum of Denmark Collection in Copenhagen (see image 33a), owes its current identity to a seventeenth-century auction catalogue. In the catalogue, it is listed as "the Arm of St Olaf inside a brass repository" (*Brachium Sancti Olai Capsae ex orichalco inclusum*). It was bought for the Danish Royal Collection from this auction of rarities in 1684. The catalogue is the earliest existing written source specifically referring to the reliquary as the arm of St Olaf. Since then, the name has been repeated

[755] A drawing in the *Wiener Heiltumsbuch* – an illustrated catalogue of reliquaries in Vienna Cathedral dating from 1502 – represents a footed arm reliquary, described in the caption as "the arm of St Vitus with a silver & gold monstrance". The drawing does not reveal whether the arm itself was transparent or why the term 'monstrance' was used. An alternative design on the same page of the *Heiltumsbuch* is a monstrance with a hand-shaped part on top, captioned as "a silver monstrance with the arm of St George in silver". The images are reprinted in Cárdenas 2013, 121.

and it has now stuck. In 1737, when the object already belonged to the National Museum, it was assumed that it came from Nidaros, and this information was added to the inventory,[756] yet nothing is known of its actual history before it was sold at the auction in Copenhagen. If the Nidaros connection could be verified, the arm would be the only remaining body-part reliquary from Norway, but this cannot be confirmed from existing sources. If it really is a reliquary of St Olaf, its absence from the sixteenth-century inventories of Nidaros Cathedral that do exist is striking. In fact, it is absent from all existing medieval written sources: no reference to an arm reliquary of St Olaf has been found, and the decoration and illustration implies that the reliquary was not commissioned specifically for the relic of St Olaf, as there is no textual or visual reference to him or even to a king. Nevertheless, as there is no better name for the arm, I will continue to refer to it in this section as St Olaf's arm, even if visually it primarily represents Christ, as I will argue below.

The arm has been discussed in Norwegian, Danish and German art history since the 19th century. The arm's attribution to St Olaf – as well as its Nidaros background – is commonly though not unanimously accepted. Danish historians have suggested it might also have belonged to Ribe or alternatively Roskilde. Despite the fact that the previous owner, Hugo Lützow, was born in Mecklenburg and travelled around Europe, Fritze Lindahl believes he did not buy it abroad, but instead inherited it from the family of his Danish wife Ide Rosenkrantz.[757] The Norwegian art historian Grethe Authén Blom defines the attribution to St Olaf as uncertain, but not to be excluded, and the German art historian Martina Junghans shows equal reserve in her doctoral thesis on medieval German arm reliquaries, referring to it as an "arm reliquary of an unknown saint".[758]

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[756] Junghans 2002, 93–94; Duin 1984, 365–370; Lindahl 1985, 45–60. See also Liepe 2017, 609–611; Worsaae 1859, *142,* no. 530; Undset 1878, 62; Kielland 1922, 44–45. (The reliquary is also discussed by Fritze Lindahl in the article Ein Armreliquiar aus Dänemark, published in *Museen der Stadt Køln,* bulletin 5, 1985, which I was not able to access.)

[757] Junghans 2002, II: 93–94; Lindahl 1985, 46–48; 56–59.

[758] Authén Blom 1994, 20–21; Junghans 2002. II: 93. See Junghans also for a comprehensive bibliography on the object.

The reliquary was most likely made around the end of the 12th century, which makes it two centuries older than the three other preserved Nordic arm reliquaries. Stylistic comparisons with arm reliquaries in the churches of St Gereon and St Kunibert in Cologne have shown that the so-called St Olaf's arm reliquary was probably also made in Cologne, and perhaps even in the same workshop as the others, in about 1175.[759] The similarities can be seen in the shapes, decorations, folds of the sleeve and half-medallions with saints. The sculptural style is rather simple, between what could be described as late Romanesque and early Gothic. The folds of the sleeve are picked out with curved relief lines and do not imitate the surface profile.

The arm is made of gilt copper over a wooden core, with details of enamel and precious stones. A round rock crystal window is inserted in the middle of the arm. The arm is 42.5 cm long, but the original length can only be estimated, as the hand is missing. The hand was attached with a hinge that permitted the opening of the reliquary at the wrist. The profiled base of the arm is detachable as well.[760] Most visual details are not sculpted, but painted in enamel: the edge and side of the sleeve are decorated with two different ornamental bands, and Christ, four angels and four saints are depicted on the sleeve. The base of the reliquary has a text painted in gold on brown varnish. Even the bottom of the reliquary is prepared for display: it is covered in the same metal and has a decorative ornament engraving of squares with a cross-like flower pattern.[761] The reliquary was actually remodelled about fifty years after it was first made: the details around the base, the enamelled medallions with angels, and the crystal window are estimated to have been later additions from circa 1220.[762] Currently the object is worn out, but relatively well preserved apart from the missing hand. It is not clear when and how the hand was lost.

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[759] Junghans 2002, II: 97–98.

[760] Authén Blom 1994, 21; Lindahl 1985, 46–51. For the Cologne arm reliquaries, see for example Braun 1940, table 120, images 449–450. The form of the sleeve, the decoration and the crystal window in those and the arm of St Olaf are rather similar.

[761] The bottom plaques of arm reliquaries from the same period are often engraved with images and text. See e.g. Didier 1985, 153–154.

[762] Junghans 2002, II: 96–103; Lindahl 1985, 50–51.

Junghans suggests that both the opening mechanism at the wrist and the crystal window were added in the beginning of the 13th century, perhaps in response to the growing demand for visibly accessible relics.[763] The arm reliquaries of St Kunibert and St Gereon also lack hands, which might mean that the attachment of the hands was made with a similar mechanism that eventually proved to be a weak point. Earlier historians assumed the lost hand was made of silver, because of what was thought to be a silver fragment at the wrist.[764] The metal is actually gilt copper, and the hand was most likely made of the same material, probably with a wooden core like the rest of the structure.

A long bone relic from the reliquary is still preserved; it is identified as a *tibia*, a leg bone. In old drawings of the reliquary, the bone is still seen sticking out at the wrist.[765] No *authentica* survives to determine how the relic was identified, but as will be shown by the reliquary arm discussed below, a leg bone could be made into an arm bone by simply declaring it to be so. In general, the anatomical origins of relics and the shape of reliquaries did not correspond, nor were expected to. The arm of a saint was more useful than his leg – it was able to perform functions, such as blessing, which a leg could not.

All that remains inside the reliquary now is a piece of cloth once wrapped around the relic. The bone itself was returned to the Catholic community in Norway in 1862, and an exact copy of the reliquary was made with a hypothetical reconstruction of the missing hand to accommodate the relic.[766] Currently the relic is inside the new reliquary in the Catholic Church of St Olaf in Oslo. Norwegian researchers have been particularly keen to prove the authenticity of the relic. Church historian Johannes J. Duin claimed in 1955 that the bone could have easily been taken from the otherwise seemingly intact body of St Olaf, as the body would have been wrapped in such a way that the legs were not visible.[767] The bone was analysed in 2013 by the historian Øystein Morten and his team based on the

[763] Junghans 2002, II: 98.
[764] Nicolaysen 1888, 3; Duin 1984, 369.
[765] Undset 1878, 62–63.
[766] Duin 1984, 365–366.
[767] Duin 1984, 367–369.

assumption that the relic was really from the body of St Olaf. The results seemed to confirm the connection, as the analysis indicated that the bone had belonged to a tall man who was involved in fights and died between the years 985 and 1040.[768]

### *Dextera Domini* – the Right Hand of God

In the middle of the arm reliquary, the crystal window framed with four enamel half-medallions engraved with angels allows the relic inside to be seen. At the same point on the other side of the arm, and roughly the same size as the crystal, is a round medallion with an enamel image of Christ blessing and holding the Book of Life, flanked by the symbols of alpha and omega. Christ presented like this is reminiscent of the *Majestas Domini* images and is the key to interpreting the reliquary and its functions.

The theme of Christ continues at the base of the arm with the gold-painted quote from Psalms 117:16 – "the right hand of the Lord hath wrought strength" (*Dextera Domini fecit virtutem*). Unlike many other texts on reliquaries, the *dextera domini* sentence is prominent due to its colour and size. This means, at least in theory, that it could be read by literate members of the congregation when it was standing on an altar or being carried in procession. In addition, the bishop holding it may have been intoning the words.

The sentence has been interpreted by Cynthia Hahn as a reference to the active cult use of the reliquary and to its role as a medium of God's power.[769] The same inscription has even been seen as a clue to the meaning of all right-hand reliquaries as references to the right hand of God, although there are very few known reliquary arms with a text directly referring to it.[770] A parallel case is the eleventh-century arm reliquary of St Basil in Essen, which carries a medallion on the back of the open hand with the tiny inscription "*Dextera D(e)i*", plus an image of the Cross and a blessing hand. This, too, is referring to the

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[768] Morten 2013, 47.

[769] Hahn 1997a, 23–25. More on God's hand, see Schmitt 1990, 77–115.

[770] See Didier 1985, 153; Hahn 2012, 258; see also Legner 1995, 259. Junghans (Junghans 2002, I: 99) also argues that the Christological theme is dominant in arm reliquaries and sees a connection between arm reliquaries and the "hands of God" often represented in medieval manuscripts or paintings.

idea that God's power is to be transmitted via the hand of the saint.[771] Like with St Olaf's arm, the concept of God's right hand is linked to the symbol of the Holy Cross. St Basil's arm also has a larger inscription along the outer sleeve, referring to the saint, in the same size as the "*Dextera Domini*" text on St Olaf's arm, but St Basil's arm is otherwise not illustrated, and the folds of the sleeve are more realistic than in its Nordic counterpart. Junghans has noted that the iconography of early German arm reliquaries refers primarily to God and Christ through the symbolism of God's right hand.[772]

In both arms, the text and image indicate the reliquary's religious and cultic meaning. After Christ's ascension, the saints were the human instruments of God's power on Earth. Imitating Christ, as the reliquary arm imitates Christ's blessing gesture, they lent their arms to God. There is no way to confirm the original position of the hand, and for the medieval uses of the reliquary, that might not even make a big difference. In either position, it could bless. A fourteenth-century Liber Ordinarius reports that St Basil's arm was actually used during mass to perform a final benediction.[773] Other arm reliquaries have probably been used in the same way. As Hahn has observed, the sleeves on medieval arm reliquaries are often portrayed not in a position that cloth would naturally hang when the arm is held upright, with the hand pointing upwards; instead, the sleeve seems to hang towards one side, the way it would do when the arm was in a horizontal position, as when making the sign of the blessing.[774] This is also the case with the "St Olaf" arm reliquary. The decorated bottom side of the base, too, would serve its purpose when it was lifted and thus could be seen from all sides.

The theme of God's right arm or hand is recurrent in the Bible. Also in the powerful Psalm 18, David praises God's help: "You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported

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[771] Hahn 1997a, 25–27.

[772] Junghans 2002, I: 94–97; II: 100.

[773] Hahn 1997, 27; Junghans 2002, I: 88–90.

[774] Hahn 2012, 140. Reudenbach (2008, p. 96) has commented on the position of the sleeve as well, but without associating it to the sign of the blessing.

me".[775] Augustine refers to it in his Confessions: "I summon your right hand to my help".[776] But what is the meaning of "God's right hand"? The answer is in the largest medallion image on St Olaf's arm (see image 33b). In his *Expositions on the Psalms*, Augustine specifies: "His own right hand, and His holy arm, hath healed for him. What is the Lord's holy Arm? Our Lord Jesus Christ. ----Our Lord Jesus Christ is therefore the arm of God, and the right hand of God".[777] He is essentially *the* right arm, sitting on God's right side. To sum up, the iconography on the reliquary arm seems to be focused on Christ as a vessel of God's power, as conveyed by the Bible.

In the iconography of Christ, the theme of the right hand is not only related to Christ as the right hand of God; even the right hand of Christ has its own significance in the late-medieval cult of his five wounds.[778] The sequence "on the five wounds of Christ" (*De quinque vulneribus Christi*), based on St Gregory's prayer, begins by thanking his right hand for the redemption gained by its suffering on the cross and asking it to lead the way to the right direction.[779] As Christ's human and corporeal hand, it has an immediate knowledge of pain, which links it more directly to the experience of martyrs and to the sufferings of human life.

**St Olaf Reconsidered**

Despite the lack of medieval sources or iconography connecting the arm to St Olaf, are there any facts supporting the connection? The

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[775] *dedisti mihi clipeum salutis tuae et dextera tua confortavit me;* English standard version, translation from http://biblehub.com/psalms/18-35.htm (cited 27.1.2016).

[776] *et invoco dexteram tuam,* Augustine 2016, 144–145.

[777] *Sanavit ei dextera eius et brachium sanctum eius. Quod est brachium sanctum Domini? Dominus noster Jesus Christus. ---- Ergo Dominus noster Jesus Christus brachium Dei, et dextera Dei.* Augustine 1841, p. 1253; English translation in Augustine 2007, 480. -This interpretation was repeated by later medieval thinkers such as Alain de Lille; see e.g. Ainonen 2008, 21–24. -In A Sermon to Catechumens on the Creed, Augustine explains further: "He is blessed, and from blessedness which is called the right hand of the Father, of very blessedness the name is, right hand of the Father"; see Augustine 1887, 373.

[778] Lohfert Jørgensen 2005, 113–129.

[779] Thesaurus hymnologicus, 336. "*Ave dextra manus Christi / Perforata plaga tristi / Nos ad dextram iube sisti / Quos per crucem redemisti*". (Hail, Christ's right hand / pierced by a sad blow / order us to come to the right / (us, ) whom you redeemed on the cross.")

possibility is neither contradicted by the relic bone originating from a leg, nor by the iconography pointing towards Christ. Both discrepancies are quite common in medieval reliquaries. Thematic and historical aspects pointing towards Olaf are worth considering even if they are not enough for conclusive proof.

The theme of the omnipotently powerful right hand is, in fact, present in the cult of St Olaf, too. In the twelfth-century sequence of the day for St Olaf, *Lux illuxit*, the saint's helping hand is praised in an obvious reference to God's right hand: "Your right hand saves us" (*tua salvet dextera*).[780] Although the theme of God's right hand is recurrent in medieval texts, it is not common in liturgies for saints' days. The words are not exactly the same as in the psalm quoted on the reliquary, but the content is the same; so far, this is the only known reference thematically connecting the reliquary to the cult of St Olaf. The coinciding datings to the 12th century for both reliquary and sequence should not be over-interpreted, however. It could just as easily indicate the importance of God's right hand generally in this period, as indicate a common commission or connection to the cult of St Olaf. In the latter case, the person behind the sequence – Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson (who became a saint himself a little later) – could also have contributed to the visual and material aspect of the cult by purchasing the reliquary. He supposedly travelled to Rome in around the year 1160 for his *pallium*, which would have been too early for the reliquary, but during his trip, he could at least have gained knowledge of where arm reliquaries could be acquired.

The lack of Olaf-related iconography on the arm could, in this case, be explained by the cult being in its early stages.[781] The absence of St Olaf would not have been an issue for laypeople anyway, who seldom got near enough to reliquaries to distinguish the images; and from the clerics' point of view, a reliquary illustrated with images of the Lord would be an honour for the relics and suitable for a king and martyr like Olaf.

The quote from Psalms inscribed on the reliquary can also be seen from a royal perspective, as the early Danish historian Holger

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[780] Lidén 1999, 398.

[781] Liden 1999, 53.

Jacobaeus explained in his *Museum Regium* (1696). He pointed out that the same biblical quote was the motto written on the coins (*nobler*) of Danish King Hans (1455–1513); and thus also the arm would have been included in the king's treasury (*cimelia sacra*).[782] Jacobaeus argued that the quote on the reliquary would have inspired the king to such an extent that he eventually chose it as his motto. In that case, the reliquary must have been acquired by the religious king as an actual object of veneration, not a mere curiosity. He could hardly have confiscated it from Nidaros, as the reformatory turns allowing such acts had not yet taken place. Furthermore, King Hans' son and successor, King Christian II, is known to have asked the Nidaros clergy to send him a relic of St Olaf. Would he have done that if a magnificent arm reliquary of St Olaf already belonged to his family? Without commenting on Jacobaeus' theory, Grethe Authén Blom has suggested that Christian II's request could have been the exact moment when the reliquary arm was sent to Denmark. She imagined it was already regarded as "old" in Nidaros and so less important than the supposedly intact body.[783] However, the idea of Nidaros donating a valuable reliquary, particularly one with liturgical functions, is not plausible. Returning to the hypothesis that King Hans or his son were owners of the reliquary, another anomaly presents itself: if the reliquary had once belonged to the royal family in the 16th century, it would have to have been lost at some point for the same item to be bought back again in 1684. Equally likely or likelier (and certainly simpler) in my view, is that the object was brought from Germany as war booty or a family heirloom in the 17th century.

**A Benedictine Arm?**

Although the reliquary is clearly centred around the symbolism of Christ, it cannot have been known as the "Arm of Christ", as body-part reliquaries of Christ do not exist. The option of St Olaf, however, cannot be discarded quite so easily. Notwithstanding the lack of confirming sources, the reliquary could theoretically have been venerated as the "Arm of St Olaf". If not, whose arm could it have been? Are there more likely candidates? The images and text covering

[782] Jacobæus 1696, 56–57; archive card at DNM.
[783] Authén Blom 1994, 29.

its surface do not seem to provide an unequivocal answer, but they do provide material for analysis and various hypotheses. This is, after all, the only known preserved arm reliquary in Nordic countries with figurative images; the others are only decorated with ornaments and text, and the documents concerning those that are now lost say nothing of illustrations.

Four possible candidates are portrayed on the sleeve. Just above the base, there are four half-medallions with four unidentified saints, each holding a book: a bishop, an abbot, a female saint in a veil (see image 33c), and a male saint or apostle. That all four are holding books, like Christ, is an underlined reference to the Scriptures – it is as if they were all reading the psalm on the reliquary together. On the other hand, the books may also simply be their attributes. All the apostles could naturally be portrayed with a book in hand, and there are several bishop, abbot, and abbess saints with books as their personal attributes.

Fritze Lindahl argues that the female saint is the central figure; the apostle makes the sign of the blessing towards her, and the abbot is turned towards her. She also observes that the saints are depicted in two pairs in which both saints are turned towards each other; and their connection is subtly underlined by the folds in their clothes. The abbot and the female saint are wearing clothes with soft, curved folds, whereas the bishop's and apostle's clothes have straighter folds.[784] Based on a comparative study by art historian Dietrich Kötzche, the saintly figures can be associated with other objects related to the cult of St Anno. Lindahl has also noted that there is similarity between the bishop on the reliquary and contemporaneous Anno images. Anno, who was the founder of a Benedictine Abbey, might then be accompanied by other Benedictine saints – St Benedict and St Scholastica.[785] If the reliquary was made for the purposes of the Anno cult, however, one would expect St Anno to be somehow visually prominent in the reliquary, but on the reliquary all four saints seem equal in value. Although it would not be unusual for the reliquary to

[784] Lindahl 1985, 52–53.
[785] Lindahl 1985, 54–58.

contain relics of these saints, and perhaps Christ, arm reliquaries were usually perceived as representing the hand of one saint.

Lindahl also notes that similar images of saints in German arm reliquaries of the same period usually are accompanied by the names of the saints, and that there is a connection between the saints. One possible explanation for the absence of names might be that the saints were already familiar to the community that originally used the reliquary. Another is that the reliquary was made with generic saints to be suited for any local cult needs. Lindahl suggests that it could have been used in Ribe Cathedral or the Benedictine convent nearby. The prominence of the nun figure and the presence of St Benedict could be fitting for a community of Benedictine nuns. In Ribe, the archbishop figure could have been identified as the patron saint of the abbey, St Nicholas. A silver arm existed in Ribe Cathedral in 1312, but no details of it are known.[786]

Junghans argues that the hypothesis of generic saints is unconvincing, but agrees that the bishop may have been the main saint; the probability is supported by the similar placement of the image of the main saint in another arm reliquary. Building on the idea of St Anno as the central figure, Junghans adds the abbess St Walburga and the martyr St Benignus to the list of possible candidates for these saints. She points out that the abbess figure is not only portrayed with a book, but also a flower, which is one of the attributes of St Walburga; while the apostle figure could be St Benignus, who was known as the apostle of Bourgogne. Both saints are related to St Anno's lifetime activity: he purchased their relics and arranged for their translation to new cult places.[787] Junghans' interpretation thus excludes the possible links with a local cult or roles the reliquary could have had in Denmark.

To conclude, the arm was venerated as the arm of a saint – it originally represented a Benedictine bishop and was used in a Benedictine abbey in Germany or Denmark until, at an unspecified later point in its history, it begun to be perceived as the arm of St Olaf. The Benedictine iconography would not have hindered its being

[786] Lindahl 1985, 54–58; Petersen 1874, 437: Ribe Oldemoder, 1869, 116.
[787] Junghans 2002, II: 98–100.

accommodated into the cult of St Olaf, and the *topos* of the right hand would even have facilitated that. At the same time, its large medallion and text never ceased to remind its audiences of the origin of the power in the right hands of all saints – the right hand of God, personified by Christ.

### 7.3 An Arm for Secular Power – The Arm of the 10,000 Knights

A second arm reliquary of unknown provenance in the Museum of Denmark (see image 34a) was once described as "peculiar" ("*ejendommeligt*") by the Danish historian E. Horskjaer.[788] In the Nordic context it is certainly the only preserved one of its kind – a wooden arm with a large vertical window or door – but in the rest of Europe, this type of reliquary is actually not so unusual. What is particular about it in comparison to the other three preserved arm reliquaries in the North is that it might be possible to identify its commissioner or donor. In the following, I discuss the likelihood of who this was and what the reliquary might have meant for him.

Before my own fairly recent article,[789] there has been no other research on this fifteenth-century reliquary. In the museum archives, there is no material about it, except an archival card describing it as the arm of one of the 10,000 Knights, and a drawing of it in a nineteenth-century catalogue; other than that, its history is unknown. In 1825 it became part of the Royal Kunstkammer collection, which was transferred to the Danish National Museum in 1848.[790] The circumstances of its acquisition by the Kunstkammer have not been documented, so it is not absolutely certain that it is from the Nordic Middle Ages, and thus its connection to local history is purely based on the hypothesis concerning its owner.

Like most arm reliquaries, it is of the right arm, with realistic shape and proportions. The length is 61 cm; the palm of the hand is open; and the fingers are straight and slim. The position of the fingers, with plenty of space between them, might have allowed for rings or even a

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[788] Horskjær 1969, 60.

[789] Lahti 2015. Much of this chapter is based on the article. For a recent contribution particularly to the question of the visibility of the bone inside the arm reliquary, see Liepe 2017, 612–619.

[790] Gundestrup 1991, 317; NM image archive card, unpublished

glove to be put on them – which is not uncommon with arm reliquaries – but they would not have been a permanent part of the sculpture. The arm and base are simpler than in the other Nordic arm reliquaries that survive – there are, for instance, no imitations of cloth patterns or folds in the sleeve. Instead, the arm is clothed in a tight inner sleeve and a looser-fitting outer sleeve. The inner sleeve has two small nails or rivets at the wrist, imitating buttons. The position of the outer sleeve, opening slightly towards one side, is like a minimalist version of the hanging sleeve mentioned above regarding the arm of St Olaf. The niche for relics is long, vertical, and rectangular, occupying nearly the whole length of the sleeve, and there is a bone relic inside the niche. The base of the reliquary is flat, hexagonal, and attached to the arm from below with two large nails. The top of the base is red, but the edges of its underside are bright blue or turquoise.

The reliquary is made of oak. Its surface is covered in the remains of medieval paint on top of a linen layer (at least on the sleeve). The hand and most of the sleeve are painted silver, and there is gold lining around the edges of the relic space and on the wrist, as if trying to imitate a metal reliquary. Considering the slenderness and simple form of the arm, it could have actually once been covered in gilt silver like several other arm reliquaries of the period; however, there are no other signs of that having been the case. Furthermore, as conservator Kaja Kollandsrud has pointed out, wooden sculptures painted with metallic colours were not necessarily a poor man's version of more expensive gold and silver items. For a sculptor specialising in wood, the material may have been ideal for creating the desired shape, and the work of the best wood sculptors, together with the use of high-quality paints, could prove as expensive as metalwork.[791]

The vertical niche enclosing the relic is painted red, as was customary in medieval reliquaries. The niche is open, but it must have once had a wooden door or lid, a lattice, or a glass window.[792] The only signs of this are small nails and nail-holes along the inner edge of the space. There are no signs of a hinge-type attachment. The size of the opening is unique among the remaining Nordic reliquaries, but

[791] Kollandsrud 2014, 51–66.

[792] Examples of glass and lattice: Kötsche 1973, abb. 64; Bergmann 1989, 310–311.

does not necessarily help in defining its age. Tall, vertical windows can be found already in thirteenth-century reliquaries, but in general their size increased with time.

The nearest stylistic equivalent to this is a twelfth-century wooden arm from Cologne with similar outer and inner sleeves and a simple, realistic, open hand.[793] It has lost its base, and instead of paint, it has been coated with gilt silver, the remains of which can be seen in the palm. Despite the metal coating, the wooden arm has a careful finish. The main difference, however, is that instead of a long vertical relic niche, the older Cologne reliquary has once had a round crystal, which was later removed and placed in the middle of the palm. Even so, the similarities in shape are remarkable and might indicate a common origin or at least influence. As Cologne was practically the centre for the production of wooden reliquary busts and also had specialised artisans making reliquary arms, it is the most probable place of origin for the Copenhagen arm as well.

**Here is the Arm of One of the 10,000 Knights**

A bone is visible in the open vertical niche; it is wrapped in silk and is nearly as long as the niche. The corresponding sizes imply that the reliquary might have been originally made for this relic. In the Nordic material, it is quite rare that relic and reliquary still remain together, and it seems even more miraculous in this case, since the niche is not covered. It seems plausible that whatever did cover it got lost only at a later stage, perhaps only after it joined the museum collection. In the middle of the silk-wrapped relic, a parchment *authentica* is attached with two small stitches. Around the *authentica*, the silk is rather worn and reveals some of the bone and a soft brown fabric, probably wool, tied around the bone with string. On the reverse side is a seam over the whole length of the bone, and the silk is nearly intact. The silk has a red vegetal and animal pattern on a background of alternating yellow and green stripes.

The relic is a femur, but this anatomical fact is promptly contradicted by the *authentica* which identifies it as the arm of of one of the 10,000 Knights: *hic habet(ur) b(ra)chiu(m) unius militis de x milia*

[793] Bergmann 1989, 137–139.

*milit(um)*.[794] Is this the original relic, or has it been changed? As stated above, the shape of arm or head reliquaries is not meant to directly reflect the contents or vice versa. The shape of the reliquary has its own purpose, and so a relic of the same body-part, or even saint, is not necessary. A striking example of this visual play between reliquaries and relics is a reliquary sculpture of St Lawrence from Paris, c. 1300. The miniature naked saint, lying on his martyrium grid iron, holds in his hands a natural-sized finger which is nearly as large as himself. The finger is open at the front, for the viewers to see the relic inside. Everything in this composition suggests that the relic in question is indeed St Lawrence's finger, and yet the relic is from his hip bone.[795] The trick is surely intentional – what mattered was the *idea* of his finger, not the presence of the actual corresponding body part.

In the Danish arm reliquary, however, the content, as intended and expressed in the *authentica,* corresponds to the arm shape of the reliquary. The large window, showing the bone and *authentica* text makes this clear. "Here is an arm of one of the Ten thousand Knights" can be interpreted as referring to the reliquary as well as its contents. From the point of view of the cult, the bone has thus become part of the arm, whether or not some viewers recognise the bone as a femur. The bone may have been something else, but now it is an arm, transformed to such by the combined effect of the reliquary and the *authentica*.

The other claim in the *authentica* – that it is the arm of a soldier or knight – is not confirmed by any visual details in the reliquary. Neither the sleeve nor the open hand bear any military attributes or references to knightly ideals – the slender hand is not masculine or aggressive. Military arm reliquaries are generally not common; most represent the arms of bishops, which performed ecclesiastic gestures such as blessing.[796] Here, the neutral arm does not make a strong

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[794] Petersen 1847, 437; Worsaae 1859, 184; Horskjær 1969, 60; Liebgott 1981, 112; Liebgott 1998, 158; Danish National Museum.

[795] Van Os 2000, 19.

[796] Hahn 1997a, 26–27. For another arm reliquary of the Ten thousand Knights without military characteristics, and with a similar vertical window, see Kötzsche 1973, 53, 78; ill. 64.

statement about the status of the saint; it is primarily a holy hand. However, the transformative effect of the *authentica* works both ways: the statement "Here is an arm of one of the Ten thousand Knights" also extends to the reliquary, thus making it a military arm despite lack of iconographic evidence.

The open hand is a gesture of prayer, blessing, greeting, or oath. Arm reliquaries have actually been used for the swearing of oaths, although that has certainly never been their main function.[797] In medieval book illustrations, God's hand sometimes appears with the palm open, not pointing or blessing, only demonstrating his power. These were probably some of the meanings conveyed by the reliquary. However, I believe this reliquary arm had an additional dimension of demonstrating a different, secular power.

The Ten thousand Knights were members of a Christian army, the companions of St Acacius, and they were martyred on Ararat Mountain in 311. For this reason they are also called martyrs, or soldiers – as described in the *authentica* on the femur bone. Their legend was developed in the 12th century and was probably based on that of St Mauritius and the Theban legion. They were not as popular in the North as local saints or biblical figures, but their relics did exist in various Nordic churches. Like the 11,000 Virgins, this seemingly endless saintly collective was also a lucrative source for relic trade in the Cologne area. Their easy availability made the relics and legend widespread. Another factor in their fame was that Acacius is also known in Nordic countries as one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers. He is portrayed in a number of Danish wall paintings from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, and was thought to ward off a violent death.[798] He would thus have made a good patron saint for those who faced a military life. Indeed, one detail on the reliquary seems to indicate a family related to secular knighthood.

**The Donor Leaves His Mark**

On the reverse side of the arm, near the base, most of the paint is worn off – except for a black-and-white coat of arms (see image 34b), which

[797] Boehm 1997, 17.
[798] Liebgott 1981, 147.

is the symbol of a Danish noble family – the Ulfstands.[799] The presence of the coat of arms probably means that an Ulfstand member donated the reliquary to a church or chapel in Scania or Gotland, where the family had their lands.

The opportunity to track down the commissioner behind a reliquary is a rarity in the Nordic material: the Copenhagen arm is one of the few surviving reliquaries with any direct reference to a private person or family. Elsewhere in Europe, it is more common. Often the donor or owner indicated by the coat-of-arms was also the commissioner of the artwork,[800] but it has also happened that new emblems have been added on a reliquary after changes in ownership.[801] The commissionership can also be expressed more explicitly, like on an arm reliquary at St Gereon, Cologne, which has an enamelled portrait of the commissioner holding his donations – the two reliquary arms of St Gereon.[802]

The paint is so thoroughly missing around the coat of arms that it is impossible to say whether there have been any other images or text on the reliquary – that possibility can be neither confirmed nor excluded. In some of the Cologne reliquaries, two coats of arms are painted side by side as an alliance to mark the union of two families through marriage. In Nordic churches, those alliance coats of arms also exist in medieval wall paintings.[803]

The Ulfstand coat of arms was used from the 15th century onwards,[804] and that is also stylistically the earliest plausible date for the reliquary; and because the Reformation swept away Catholic practices and items in 1536–37, this must be the latest possible date for the reliquary. The commissioner could have been a man or woman

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[799] Danmarks adels aarbog XIII, 428–439.

[800] Bergmann 1989, 33–34; 58. On coats-of-arms on an arm reliquary, see also e.g. Kötzsche 1973, 51–52.

[801] For an example of that, on an Italian fourteenth-century arm reliquary of St Luke, see Antoine 2010, 195.

[802] The twelfth-century donor was provost Arnold von Born. Schleif 2012, 208. For three coats of arms on a fourteenth-century arm reliquary, see also Kötzche 1973, abb. 60.

[803] For Finnish coats of arms in wall paintings, see Ahlström-Taavitsainen 1984, 9; 33.

[804] Earlier, it was used by a German family Minckwitz – suggested as a possible origin for the Ulfstand family. *Danmarks adels aarbog* XIII, 428–439.

with a high position in the Church, but maybe also a wealthy member of the nobility, like the members of the Ulfstand family. At first glance, three Ulfstand men stand out as the most likely donors: Jacob Gertsen (d. 1410), Archbishop of Lund and Secretary to Queen Margaret; Holger Gregersen (d. 1542), who made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land through Germany and Venice; and his brother, the knight Truid Gregersen (1487–1545), who was involved in ecclesiastic matters like Holger.[805] All three could have had access to relics and reliquaries due to their wealth and contacts with ecclesiastic institutions.

In previous research, the only suggested candidate has been Archbishop Jacob Gertsen. That is understandable, considering his high ecclesiastic position which would have given him access to relics and reliquaries, but no further proofs or arguments of his connection with this particular reliquary have been provided.[806] Interestingly, neither the archbishop's letters nor his will contain any mention relics or reliquaries.[807] As for the pilgrim Holger Gregersen, he writes in his pilgrimage journal about seeing many relics in Venice, but does not refer to touching, let alone buying them or any reliquaries.[808] He nonetheless seems to be the most likely purchaser of the relic. Meanwhile, sources concerning the third candidate, Truid Gregersen, do not contain any references to relics or reliquaries – except in a negative context, during the Reformation. In 1537, as a representative of King Christian of Denmark, he confiscated the last remaining reliquaries of Nidaros Cathedral from the archbishop's castle, Steinvikholm.[809]

A fourth candidate, and in my view the most likely commissioner of the reliquary, is the cousin of the two brothers – Jens Holgersen (c. 1450–1523) – who was an Admiral of the Realm, a knight and a pirate. What distinguishes him is his interest and investment in religious images. He employed the German builder and sculptor Adam van Düren to plan and decorate his Scanian castle, Glimmingehus, and he

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[805] Dansk Biografisk Lexikon XVIII, 54–59; 66–71.
[806] Jexlev 1976, 47 (footnote 16); Liebgott 1998, 159.
[807] SDHK 17476 (original in parchment: RA nr. 0101). http://www3.ra.se/sdhk/pdf/17476.pdf
[808] Rørdam 1901–03, 481–492; 698–707.
[809] DN 23:451; Nissen 2009.

ordered images from other artists or artisans too. Jens Holgersen liked to see himself as a pious man and commissioner of religious images.

If the relic of the 10,000 Knights is taken as a clue, it may be no mere coincidence that an Ulfstand would choose to donate or commission a reliquary of knightly martyrs. Jens Holgersen was only knighted in his old age, but he had already been associated with knightly symbols earlier. He had his father portrayed as a knight on his tombstone, and a similar image was engraved on a limestone plate at Glimmingehus.[810] The Glimmingehus plate has been interpreted as a playful portrait of himself or his son, as the knight holds a coat of arms in each hand: one of the Ulfstand family in his right, and one of his first wife's family (Brahe) in the left. Just like in the reliquary, the combination of knight and his coat of arms appears in these two images.

Among the relief images made by Adam van Düren at Glimmingehus is one of Calvary, with Jens Holgersen as a pilgrim praying before the Virgin Mary and St John. As Jan Svanberg has pointed out, the relief represents a new, less humble attitude in donor portraits: Jens Holgersen is bigger in the relief than the biblical figures; and not only has he "nonchalantly hung his hat on a splint supporting the cross", but "his dog is about to leap for a bone on Golgotha."[811] This shows a mixture of religiosity with self-assured entitlement and open self-promotion – a combination which I'm inclined to think would have motivated him to commission an arm reliquary with his own coat of arms. Another question is where he could have acquired the sizeable relic, but one hypothesis could be that his brother Holger Gregersen brought it from his pilgrimage in 1518. Indeed, it is also possible that the entire reliquary was purchased abroad and the coat-of-arms added afterwards by the new owner.

The function of the room where the Calvary relief and other religious images are displayed is unclear: one of its suggested functions is as a private chapel.[812] However, even as such, it would

[810] The limestone engraving is a copy of the tombstone image. Nilsson 1999b, 69.
[811] Svanberg 1977, 125–139.
[812] Svanberg 1977, 128; Nilsson 1999a, 20.

have been an unusual place for an arm reliquary, considering the liturgical functions associated with it. A better location would be Vallby Church in Scania, where it could have stood on a private altar near the tomb of Jens' parents. In fact, considering the vast areas owned and governed by the Ulfstands in the area, there are dozens or hundreds of possible churches for the use and display of the reliquary.

The images commissioned by Jens Holgersen combine to leave the impression that he was a man who liked to employ skilful artisans in visually expressing his ideas and values. He wanted to demonstrate not only his wealth, but also his religious nature. Yet, all of the other above-mentioned examples of his investments in religious art are made in stone. Are there sufficient grounds to believe he would have commissioned artworks made of other materials? In her study on medieval wooden sculpture in Scania, Lena Liepe has suggested that the impressive early-sixteenth-century crucifix in Ljungby Church, associated with the local manor owned by Jens Holgersen, could have been commissioned by him.[813] A crucifix is not a very typical donor commission; Liepe observes that donors favoured altarpieces over other wooden sculptures, since it was probably easier to publish the donor's identity on such large items.[814] It seems, however, looking at the images in Glimmingehus, that Jens Holgersen was not a typical commissioner. He wanted to impress, but perhaps not in the way others did. Relics and reliquaries were always exclusive items with a high prestige, and to mark such an item with one's own symbol was certainly a way to do that.

A public expression of gratitude could be another intention when commissioning a reliquary. A large wooden sculpture of St George with inserted relics, commissioned by the Swedish regent, Sten Sture in the 1490s for St Nicholas Church in Stockholm, was officially a votive gift to the knightly St George and to St Gereon, as a token of gratitude for Sten Sture's victory in the Battle of Brunkeberg.[815] This might have inspired Jens Holgersen to similarly – albeit on a smaller

[813] Liepe 1995, 189.

[814] Liepe 1995, 36.

[815] Carlsson 1915, 51–52; Svanberg 1998, 45–50. For a recent discussion on the authorship of the sculpture group, see Tångeberg 2009b; Svanberg 2013, 323–329.

scale – combine a religious gesture with a costly investment, his love for skilful craftsmanship, and a memorial to a personal victory in one commissioned object.

In the 21st century, the Swedish National Board of Antiquities has unwittingly created a new connection between the relic and Glimmingehus.[816] Now open to public as a museum, Glimmingehus hosts a medieval knights' festival for families, the Day of the 10,000 Knights, inspired by the day of *Decem milium militum martyrum* in the medieval calendar (22 June). The attribution of the reliquary remains hypothetical, but the saintly soldiers have assumed their place at Glimmingehus.

The clearly visible Ulfstand coat of arms was a somewhat profane element in the otherwise religious object, reminding those who saw it of local political and economic power. The donor gained *memoria*, prayers for his soul, and a reputation as a pious man. If a blessing was performed with this reliquary, it would have come with an additional blessing of the commissioner, who was possibly Jens Holgersen.

### 7.4 Arms for Prayer: The Arms of Saints Birgitta and Eskil

The Linköping treasure hoard (*Linköpingsskatten*), found in a field outside the centre of Linköping, includes two gilt silver right arm reliquaries (see image 35a) of the local saints, St Birgitta and St Eskil. Based on their style, it has been estimated that they were both made in the early 15th century and probably in the same Swedish workshop.[817] There is no information, however, about what happened to them before they were found in 1676. It is thought they were buried in 1527 by the Bishop of Linköping, Hans Brask, in a field belonging to him to prevent them being confiscated, and then fled the country that same year. There are other theories as to what happened though: Olle Källström, for instance, insists that the treasure was buried as late as 1540.[818] In the year 1529, the silver arms of St Henrik and St Eric had

[816] Fredrik Nihlén, cultural environment educator at Glimmingehus, per e-mail 31.3.2015.

[817] af Ugglas 1933, 35–36; Tegnér 1997b, 399–400; Nisbeth 2001, 78–81; Källström 2011, 115–116.

[818] Källström 1939, 255–256; see also Källström 1935, 20; Tegnér 1997b, 399; Nisbeth 2001, 77–82.

been confiscated from Linköping Cathedral, and yet the arms of St Birgitta and St Eskil are not mentioned in the same document.[819] Perhaps they had therefore already been hidden and saved by Brask. Art historian Åke Nisbeth argues that the contents of the hoard belonged to Linköping Cathedral,[820] but in the absence of any medieval documents mentioning them, it has not been proved. Since 1683, both of the arm reliquaries belonged to the collection of the Swedish Collegium of Antiquities, which later developed into the present-day Historical Museum in Stockholm. They have been on display in several exhibitions about medieval history and published in catalogues for exhibitions such as "Margrete I – Regent of the North" in 1997.[821]

Both arms have a round crystal window for showing the relics and a bundle of cloth behind the window, though most of the original relics no longer exist. Both also have a tight, highly ornamented sleeve, with a text referring to the saint in question, and a hexagonal podium supported by miniature towers. Another common feature is that, unlike other preserved Nordic arm reliquaries, both bear a prayer-like engraved text and a direct reference to the saint. This indicates that the reliquaries were either commissioned or modified specifically for those saints.

**The Writing Hand of St Birgitta**

Saint Birgitta's arm-shaped reliquary is 51 cm long. The podium is hexagonal, with three house-like supporting feet. Each of the sides of the podium is decorated by three circles with a four-leaf clover on a green and yellow-green background (partly damaged). The arm itself is very slim and somewhat unrealistic compared, not only to the arm reliquary of St Eskil, but all the other Nordic arm reliquaries which have a natural widening of the arm from the wrist to the elbow. The slimness also makes the hand the heaviest part of the object,[822] thus making it less stable, which has probably affected its display, carrying

[819] One for the arm bone of St Eric, ca. 1,5 kg (7,5 lmk 2 l), and one for the arm bone of St Henrik, ca. 1,3 kg (6,5 lmk 4 l.) Källström 1939, 212.
[820] Nisbeth 2001, 78.
[821] Thordeman – Källström – Rydbeck 1951, 23; Tegnér 1997b, 399–400.
[822] Christensson 2010 (conservator's report 613-573-2010, SHM).

and holding. One might ask whether the excessive slimness is meant to represent femininity; however, other European arm reliquaries with a similar slim shape are still dedicated to male saints – such as St George in Prague Cathedral's treasury or St Blaise in Braunschweig. The fingers are in a loose blessing or "pen-holding position", which is a typical feature of St Birgitta's iconography, as she is often presented reading or writing, and her hand reliquary in Lund (see below) also featured a pen. There are no evident signs that a pen would have been attached to the fingers, but that cannot be excluded either. The sleeve has four different decorative stripes of vine, rose and acanthus patterns on a darker background. In the middle or the arm, there is a round lens-formed rock crystal, through which a relic would once have been visible. The crystal is larger than the one in St Eskil's arm, and surrounded, more simply than Eskil's crystal, by a relief ribbon ornament. It also protrudes slightly from the arm, which gives a camera-lens-like impression, reminiscent of a telescope or *hagioscope*.

In the wrist, there is another relief ribbon ornament, continuing down the sleeve with buttons (three out of six buttons still remain) and with an engraved, partly damaged text which reads: *Mistica Birgitte digitus tue (…)iste pro nobis ora birgitta patrona de (...)*.[823] The text (see image 35b) is very small and hardly discernible; a cleric holding the arm would be able to read it, but a pilgrim watching it pass in a procession would certainly not. When the text got damaged is not known, but it probably happened when the hoard was being buried or accidentally discovered.

Apart from asking for Birgitta's prayers, the text in its current state is difficult to interpret. "Mystic" (*mistica*) refers to Birgitta's visionary religiosity; and *Birgitte digitus tue* may be translated as "Birgitta, your finger", but *tue* could also be the imperative of the verb *tueor* – in which case it would be "Birgitta's finger, [please] protect". The damaged part of the engraving after the "*tue*" leaves this unresolved, while the *-iste* that remains of the following damaged word is probably the ending of a verb in the past tense and second person. This must therefore refer to something Birgitta has done for the benefit of her followers. The plea, "pray for us" (*pro nobis ora*) –

[823] Tegner 1997, 400; Thordeman–Källström–Rydbeck 1951, 23.

usually in the slightly different syntax of *ora pro nobis* – is most often heard in the prayer *Ave Maria*, and so it might be a reference here to Birgitta's Marian mysticism. It is also repeated in an officium for Birgitta: "*ora pro nobis, beata Birgitta*". Finally, she is addressed as the "patron saint of " (*patrona de*) but the end of the text after this is also damaged and illegible. Who is Birgitta the patron saint of in this context? In medieval documents, she is referred to as "our patron" (*patrona nostra*), but here she might have been the patron of a specific church or abbey. The words do not otherwise resemble any other liturgical text in the Birgitta canon.

While the text is probably directly referring to the relic of an actual finger inside the reliquary (now lost), it could also, on a more symbolic level, be referring to Birgitta's visionary ability to point her followers in the right spiritual direction – the same quality St Olaf was praised for. According to the eighteenth-century antiquarian Peringskiöld's description, the reliquary once contained an arm bone and a finger bone wrapped in scarlet silk.[824] The only relic presently in the reliquary is the arm bone of a male. It is not known whether this is the bone that was originally inside the Birgittine arm – Nisbeth presumes it was taken from the Eskil reliquary at one point and then mistakenly put back in the other arm.[825] In any case, it would have been quite normal to complement her relics with those of other saints.

Nisbeth associates the relic with the year 1430, when Linköping cathedral received a Birgitta relic from Vadstena.[826] It may have been related with the altar prebend of St Birgitta, founded in early 15th century.[827] However, there is another possible background to the arm of St Birgitta. The description of a reliquary that Lund Cathedral had in 1414 seems to refer to an identical object: it was shaped as a golden hand holding a pen and containing a fragment of St Birgitta's finger.[828] Could that reliquary have traveled from Lund to Linköping before 1529 to be buried and saved from the confiscations? It is also possible that someone in Linköping ordered a reliquary to be made following

[824] Peringskiöld quoted by Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 43.
[825] Nisbeth 2001, 80.
[826] Nisbeth 2001, 81.
[827] Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 44.
[828] Braun 1940, 383; SRD VIII, 448.

the model in Lund – they could even have been commissioned by the same person. As we have seen, some Nordic saints' hands were represented by two arm reliquaries in different churches. Considering the high quality and valuable materials of the reliquary, a royal donor seems likely. In any case, the similarity between the two preserved Linköping arms is too strong to be a coincidence; rather, it implies that they should have been made and purchased at the same time, most likely for the same church. The Lund inventory, however, does not mention a reliquary for St Eskil.

**The Blessing Hand of Saint Eskil**

As stated above, arm reliquaries often represent the arms of bishops or other ecclesiastic authorities – people whose hands and gestures had liturgical meaning already during their lifetime; their hands were particularly sanctified by the rituals they had performed. Bishops wore decorative gloves and bishop's rings during the ceremonies, and those details reappear in episcopal arm reliquaries.[829] The same gestures and episcopal attributes can be recognised in two-and three-dimensional images of bishops. The only remaining Nordic arm reliquary of a bishop is that of the martyred missionary bishop, St Eskil. It makes the blessing gesture with two uplifted fingers, but otherwise it is not a typical example of the recognisable episcopal arm: it has none of the episcopal attributes. It does not essentially differ from St Birgitta's arm reliquary found at the same site. The possible arm reliquaries of Bishop Henrik (discussed further below) could have had a more episcopal look, but that can no longer be confirmed.

Saint Eskil's arm is only slightly longer than St Birgitta's (52 cm). Its proportions are also more realistic, with a widening from the wrist towards the podium. The podium is larger than the one for Birgitta's arm, but with similar decorations of circles with clovers and similar house-formed feet at the corners. His fingers are in the blessing position, which is also typical in medieval images of St Eskil. The root of the middle finger is darker as if it had been broken or had a ring, and the gilding is missing in the nails of the hand. The sleeve has relief ribbon ornaments in the wrist, below it and at the foot; the

[829] Hahn 1997, 26–27.

ribbons are decorated with coloured stones (four out of fifty-four stones remain). Between the wrist and the next ribbon there are six buttons. In the middle there is a window lens for seeing the relics, framed – in the apt description of Göran Tegnér – by a

> hexafoil decorated with filigree roses, pearls in rose-shaped insets, as well as rubies and sapphires (three of them missing); in the upper and lower lobes are insets with glass- or rock-crystal lenses, on which is the saint's name is painted with red: *Eskilli*.[830]

At the lower edge of the podium, there is an engraved text: "Noble overseer, look at us, sad servants" (*Nobilis antistes nos cervos respice tristes*). The word *cervos* is a misspelling, as it translates as "stags", when it should be "servants" (*servos*). (See image 35c.) The form of the name "*Eskilli*" may be understood as vocative, dative, or genitive – addressing the saint or stating that the reliquary belongs to him.

Like on the arm of St Birgitta, the text is small and hardly discernible to anyone other than the person holding the reliquary. The text also seems to address the saint directly in prayer form. Looking more carefully, however, the words may not be addressed to St Eskil. It is a nearly exact quote from an anonymous English sermon manuscript, in which the phrase ends a passage concerning a quote from the Bible (Matthew 24, 45): "Noble overseer, look at us, your sad servants" (*Nobilis antistes servos tuos respice tristes*).[831] The expression "*nobilis antistes*" is used in other medieval texts that refer to actual existing people, so it could have referred to Eskil as well, although, in the sermon, this particular sentence seems to be addressed to God.

In any case, the sentence in the sermon corresponds to the reliquary text to such an extent that the commissioner of the reliquary, most likely a bishop, must have been familiar with the sermon. But

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[830] Tegnér 1997, 399–400. In Tegnér's text from the Margrete exhibition catalogue quoted here, the note about the gilding of the nails has been switched mistakenly to describe the Birgitta reliquary. See also Thordeman, Källström, and Rydbeck 1951, 23–24.

[831] (Oxford, Bodl. Barlow 24: 100, C6) Schneyer 1980, 21; on the manuscript, see also Wenzel 2005, 203–206.

what is the connection between St Eskil and this quote? The theme of sad servants is not present in the jubilant officium of St Eskil[832] by Brynolf of Skara. Instead, the association may have been born through the context in which the sermon text was used. The sermon is destined for use on a day of a confessor saint.[833] It is also written in a way that it can be adjusted to refer to a local saint as an exemplary servant of God. It may have been used on a feast day of St Eskil despite the fact that he was not only a confessor, but a martyr. A copy of the sermon may also have been used on Eskil's feast days in the church to which the reliquary was commissioned, but the fact that Eskil's name is painted, unlike the engraved quote, makes the connection between them less immediate.

Now that the relics have gone, only a bundle of white cloth can be seen through the window. The view cannot have been much different when the relics were still in their place, because the inventory of 1713 describes the contents as half an arm bone of St Eskil and several smaller bones – wrapped in a cloth.[834] Before that, there seem to have been more relics, as one bone is said to have been stolen while the reliquary was being shown to the royal family and other noble guests in 1690 – fourteen years after the Linköping treasure was found.[835] It has been suggested that the arm bone found in St Birgitta's arm reliquary would actually be the one from St Eskil's arm.[836] The only reason for the suggestion seems to be that the bone was identified as belonging to a man, which is not quite enough to prove it as true. If St Birgitta's reliquary included an arm bone already in 1713, when St Eskil's arm bone was still in its place,[837] no such switch was necessary, although it cannot be completely excluded.

Another gilt arm reliquary of St Eskil was, as mentioned earlier, kept in the Franciscan Abbey of Eskilstuna, which – as the name indicates – was the centre of his cult. The Eskilstuna arm was

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[832] SRS II, 397–404.

[833] Schneyer 1980, 21.

[834] Nisbeth 2001, 81. For more on the practice of relics shown through a window, yet wrapped in cloth, see Bagnoli 2014, 100–109, and my chapter on monstrances.

[835] Nisbeth 2001, 80–81.

[836] Thordeman–Källström–Rydbeck 1951, 23; Nisbeth 2001, 80–81.

[837] SHM inv.nr. 6 / 914195.

confiscated in 1534, so we cannot compare the two arms, but we know the foot was decorated with "two towers".[838] The six house-like items supporting the foot of the Linköping arm could also be called towers, but they can hardly have been similar in Eskilstuna, as two of those would not be enough for the reliquary to stand.

St Basil's arm reliquary in Essen, mentioned above in relation to St Olaf's arm, lends itself to comparison with St Eskil's too. St Basil was also a bishop, and his arm reliquary even has an episcopal glove. Along the edge of the outer sleeve is an engraved text addressed to the saint: *serve dei vivi benedic nos sancte basili*. In other words, it is also an arm for prayer like the arms of St Eskil and St Birgitta. St Basil's arm was used to perform the blessing in medieval Essen;[839] and so perhaps Eskil's arm, with its fingers in the blessing position, was perfectly suited for the same use in Linköping Cathedral or another Swedish church.

Both the arms of St Birgitta and St Eskil present the saint's hand in an iconographically coherent position for the respective saint: Birgitta's writing, Eskil's blessing. Apart from that and apparently being made by the same master, they also share the textual dimension connecting the reliquaries directly to the practices of liturgy and prayer.

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Over thirty lost arm reliquaries were discovered in Nordic written documents, while four such objects still exist. Arm reliquaries were prestigious objects, often commissioned by royals and bishops, and had an active role in the church. They represented one saint, often a local one, but could contain relics of various saints. Despite this, many lost arm reliquaries are registered without names in medieval documents, which probably implies that their identity was obvious to everybody at the time. The four existing arms carry visual or textual references to specific saints and to one commissioner, whereas their medieval provenance and history is unknown. They represent three

[838] Källström 1939, 169.
[839] Junghans 2002, I: 88.

different material and stylistic types, but share the characteristic of providing a view to their contents through a window.

## 8 – Head Reliquaries

After whole bodies, heads or skulls have been venerated as the most valuable relics, and therefore head reliquaries have enjoyed a special status as well. They are unique in representing the face of the saint, thus allowing the experience of eye contact and a stronger impression of presence than other kinds of reliquaries. They were also used as liturgical instruments, though to a lesser degree than reliquary arms, but there are records of head reliquaries being used for blessing as well.[840] Even more than hands, they certainly invited personal contact. That reliquaries were kissed by devoted pilgrims was not exceptional; a less frequently recorded phenomenon was that a head reliquary could also give a kiss. This is known from medieval Xanten, where donors received a kiss of gratitude from the head reliquary of St Ursula.[841] Whether this was a local peculiarity or a wider custom is not known, but kissing certainly would be one of the gestures a head reliquary is suited to perform.

In medieval texts, according to the examples collected and analysed by Joseph Braun, head reliquaries were often referred to as *caput*. This could also mean a relic of a head, but mostly it was used to refer to a reliquary in the shape of head or bust – the latter being still more common in the late Middle Ages.[842] In Nordic Countries, most documents refer to the heads in Latin as *caput* or *caluarium* (skull), but also with local words such as *huffud* (head). This demonstrates how the head reliquary was – both terminologically and experientially – seen as identical to the relic and as representing the actual living head of the saint.

Other terms in medieval sources have also been mooted to be referring to head reliquaries, although these clues do not seem to lead any further. For instance, the confiscation list from Furuby includes a note on "head-silver" that was interpreted by af Ugglas to

[840] Snoek 1995, 297.
[841] Kroos 1985, 31.
[842] Braun 1940, 64–65.

mean a silver head, while Källström argued it could only be a crown or other head decoration.[843] Meanwhile, Källström himself makes a bold interpretation of a receptacle confiscated from Ekebyborna as containing a "skull" (*ett kar meth en skall*). Although he admits it is light for the estimated size of a head reliquary, he takes the word *skall* at face value instead of discussing its orthography, and explains its low weight by suggesting that the reliquary might have been made of lighter, less precious metal.[844] I would suggest an alternative interpretation based on the fact that the Swedish word *skål*, for bowl, would have been written in ancient texts without the å, as *skal* or *skall*.[845] This path does not lead to a clear illustration of the artefact either, but implies that it was some kind of receptacle with a bowl-shaped container. Finally, *skall* can even refer to ostrich egg shells or coconut shells, as discussed in the chapter on monstrances.

Only a few Nordic head reliquaries are preserved: one wooden bust in Sigtuna, Sweden, and – depending on the definition – two or three head-shaped reliquaries made of cloth. The remaining written sources point towards several others, but the written notions are seldom unambiguous; in most cases, the shapes of the reliquaries are more or less implicit. Most of the remaining notions of head reliquaries are based on the sixteenth-century confiscation lists, which only include silver and gold objects, including sometimes gilt copper, so the lists made for that occasion do not reveal anything about head reliquaries made of wood, cloth, or anything else. Those that do remain were certainly not the only ones; they were possibly even more numerous than metal ones, but just like many other wooden sculptures and textiles, they are lost both physically and from the written sources. Both the preserved and lost head-shaped reliquaries are discussed in this chapter, beginning with the lost heads.

Skull relics were not only kept in head-shaped reliquaries, but also in reliquaries of different shapes. In Vadstena, for instance, four oval, footed, embroidered caskets were made for the skulls of saints –

[843] Af Ugglas 1935, 19; Källström 1939, 175.
[844] Källström 1939, 117; 166.
[845] See also Liepe 2015a, 75.

discussed above in the chapter on ciboria.[846] Medieval relic lists from Lund and Roskilde also refer to saints' skulls kept in caskets.[847]

Reliquary busts with life-size faces had an intense presence, but they were probably not constantly on display. In Central Europe, it has been common to keep reliquary busts in closed reliquary cupboards, exhibiting them only on special occasions.[848] Rows of Cologne busts were also inserted in the middle sections of large altarpieces in at least two German churches. The Marienstatt altarpiece has a row of reliquary busts of the Cologne Ursula group placed below relief images. In the lowest row under the busts, textile-wrapped skulls can be seen behind decorative lattices. A very similar altarpiece with busts also exists in the abbey church of St Clara in Cologne.[849] Examples of such sumptuous altarpieces are not preserved in Nordic countries, however, although two Nordic abbey churches might have owned a sufficient amount of busts for that (see below in the section of the Eleven thousand Virgins).

Nevertheless, the magnificent rows of busts in German altarpieces might have influenced the makers of some Nordic altarpieces. One example of such can be found in Sund church in the Åland islands, where the practice of placing reliquary busts in altarpieces was possibly being imitated by placing two smaller busts, not reliquaries though, below the central scene of the altarpiece.[850] The altarpieces of the Swedish churches of Munktorp, Bälinge, and Toresund all have bust figures that do not even look like reliquaries. The figures are not static like reliquary busts usually are, but small, narrow and "active" in their body language, and yet I would suggest that the reason for

[846] Estham 1991, 30–33.
[847] SRD VIII, 454; 276.
[848] Herrmann-Mascard 1975, 174; Camille 1996, 123–124; Montgomery 2010, 113–119.
[849] Montgomery 2010, 83–98.
[850] Ringbom 2005, image 266.

their presence in the altarpieces is partly related to the desire to emulate the prestige of reliquary busts.[851]

A head-shaped cult object type, although strictly speaking not a reliquary, is the so-called *Johannesschüssel* sculpture representing St John the Baptist's head on a charger. These will also be briefly discussed later in this chapter.

Finally, quite a different type of head-shaped reliquary found both in Finland and elsewhere in Europe has neither shoulders nor facial features – it can best be described as a cranium "dressed" in (red) silk. Although skulls inside wooden reliquary busts are sometimes wrapped in silk, these silk skulls are independent entities, embroidered to be seen and exhibited as such. Even these textile skull reliquaries can often be traced back to the St Ursula tradition. The only full-fledged Nordic representatives of this genre – and, unlike most European silk skulls, also sculpted – were found in Turku Cathedral, and they are discussed in the end of this chapter.

### 8.1 Lost Heads: Nordic Head Reliquaries in Medieval Documents

According to my reading of the remaining written sources, it may be inferred that there have been at least fifty head reliquaries in the Nordic region: at least ten of them were probably made of silver, some of them gilt, but most of them probably of wood or textile. Considering that not all church inventories are available, we can count on the number having been substantially higher. I have not managed to find any explicit mentions of medieval head reliquaries in Norway, but this absence can hardly be used to conclude that they never existed there. St Olaf, for instance, enjoyed such popularity that a head reliquary would have been a natural expression of his cult.

In the following pages, I analyse the remaining information on those lost heads. As observed above, there is more information on

[851] The bust existed as a form of portraiture long before and after the Middle Ages, but most medieval busts are indeed reliquaries. In written documents, "heads" are usually head-shaped reliquaries, but silver heads can also be votives. However, at least in the confiscation documents, the votives can usually be distinguished by their lower weight. Another exception is a bust-shaped aquamanile; see Grimme 1985, 459–461.

some of the lost ones than on those that remain, and even when the information is scarce, it can still be carefully studied.

**A Large Silver Head and a Small Silver Head in Lund**

The vast fifteenth-century relic and reliquary list of Lund Cathedral, *Ordo in ostensione sanctarum reliquiarum*, includes two silver heads: a large one and a small one. They are described one after the other in the list as seen below.

> Inside the large silver head with gilt hair and crown is the entire head [relic] of St Lawrence, that once belonged to the King of England.
> *In magno capite argenteo cum corona & capillis deauratis. Est integrum caput sancti laurencii quondam Regis anglie.*[852]

> Inside a small silver head with a bishop's mitre and shoulders.
> From the grave of Our Lord. Also a bone of St Clement, and of St Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury and martyr.
> *In paruo capite argenteo cum mitra episcopali, habente humeros. De sepulcro domini. Item unum os de sancto Clemente. Item de sancto thoma archiepiscopo cantuarensi martire.*[853]

It is common in medieval inventories to describe items as "large" or "small". But how large is large, and how small is small, when it comes to head reliquaries? Here, as the heads clearly had other recognisable details – the mitre in one, the gilt crown and hair in the other – the sizes were hardly mentioned simply for the sake of comparison. We can therefore assume that the differences in size were remarkable enough to be mentioned. Size can refer to a number of aspects: some head reliquaries may have been the size of an adult's head, others smaller than a child's. The average heights vary roughly between 80 and 20 cm, but they might have been larger because of extensions, such as a tall bishop's mitre – although in the Lund example, even with the mitre, the "episcopal" head is smaller. Head reliquaries usually include at least the neck, and more often than not the

[852] SRD VIII, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94–95.
[853] SRD VIII, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94; see also Hildebrand 1903, 618.

shoulders too (so in effect they are busts). They might even continue as far down as until the waist, and they can get extra height from a podium, or portable altar.[854]

When there are only a few available details for a lost object, each detail gets more attention; and yet what might at first look like a clue might not be one at all. The smaller reliquary head is described here as having shoulders – in other words, it is like a bust. This might be taken to imply that the bigger head was not a bust, as shoulders were not included in its description, yet most head reliquaries do have shoulders even if these are not explicitly mentioned as such in medieval lists of reliquaries. It also seems that head reliquaries *without* shoulders were rare after the 13th century.

The large silver head, with gilt hair and a crown, is supposed to include the whole head of St Lawrence. The description also suggests that either the head, the reliquary, or both had formerly belonged to the King of England. This seems to be a reference to a narrative that the audience was already familiar with – in the history of the cathedral. The royal connection is not just a simple detail but a source of collective pride and adds to the perceived value of the reliquary. But which King of England was the donor of the precious head? To follow up this clue, another reliquary from the same list seems to help. As discussed above in the chapter on silver *ymago* reliquaries, the list includes a reliquary in the shape of an archbishop, which was a gift from King Henry IV to the Archbishop Petrus Lykke in the context of his daughter's wedding with Eric of Pomerania.

Early head reliquaries – especially those of silver and gold – were often commissioned by medieval kings, who seemed to value the busts of saints as a powerful medium for claiming a kind of holy validation for their regency.[855] This was naturally not the only context for commissioning reliquary busts, but few others could afford the material and artwork. So, because the King of England is mentioned in connection with the silver head of St Lawrence, it seems plausible that it was part of the same donation. Again, however, as we have already seen in a number of cases in this thesis, there is no way to

[854] For a discussion of definition of head or bust reliquaries, see Hahn 2012, 118–121.
[855] Hahn 2012, 117–125.

either confirm or reject this hypothesis. Historian Jenny Stratford mentions that King Henry IV had the habit of reusing the valuable metals in some items to fashion new ones, and many of his gifts – including the reliquary for Queen Margaret – were made by two of his trusted goldsmiths using recycled materials from the royal treasure of his predecessor, King Richard II. He also gave away old items from the royal treasure *and* new objects bought from the goldsmiths of London, so even if the donation of King Henry IV could be confirmed, we would still have at least three different options for determining the material and artisanal origins of the head reliquary in Lund.[856]

The luxurious appearance of the head of St Lawrence, shining with silver and details accentuated in gold, can be imagined with the help of the remaining European silver and gold busts, although none are left in the North. The most precious materials were very appropriate, if the reliquary really was supposed to contain the entire head of one of the most venerated martyrs – a relic, in fact, also claimed and on display in a transparent monstrance in St Anne's at the Vatican.

The reliquary in Lund is described as having a crown (*corona*). St Lawrence was a deacon and martyr, and is usually portrayed as a tonsured, curly-haired young man, but not crowned. The word "corona" in medieval Latin can also be translated as referring to his saintly halo – but depicting halos on medieval reliquary busts is not very common. In fact, martyr saints were sometimes shown wearing crowns, as if crowned by their suffering, and kings are also known to have donated crowns to head reliquaries with votive-like intentions.[857] In this case, the list itself makes it clear that the reliquary not only represents St Lawrence, but also the King of England. The crown, in this context, refers to two kinds of nobility – the heavenly and the mundane. There is also a note from 1479 which probably refers to the same crowned head, when Archbishop Birger Gundersen borrowed a selection of objects from Lund Cathedral, including "a large crowned head of silver and a silver image of a bishop with a gilt foot" –

[856] Stratford 2012, 118–121.
[857] Hahn 2012, 117.

probably the reliquary recorded before St Lawrence's head in the *Ordo in ostensione* list.[858]

St Lawrence was the patron saint of Lund Cathedral, so it is quite understandable that it would have several of his relics and reliquaries. The "large" and "small" silver images of him in Lund[859] may have shown him holding a gridiron and a book, which were his two identifying symbols. His relics were also placed in eleven other reliquaries in the cathedral, and eleven altars seem to have been dedicated to him there too. His feast day (10 August) was one of the greatest annual celebrations in the cathedral and involved papal indulgences for the visitors.[860] Although St Lawrence himself is known for his opinion that the poor are the real treasures of the Church, his relics in their silver and gold reliquaries were the treasures of Lund cathedral.

The large silver head seems like a relatively straightforward case of form reflecting the contents (and the intentions of the donor), if the information is correct; but the smaller silver head is more ambiguous, as none of the three different relics inside were – as far as we know – from anybody's head. The small silver head (with shoulders) was in the shape of a bishop's head wearing a mitre, and it contained three very prestigious relics, too: an unspecified relic from the Tomb of our Lord, a bone from St Clement, and one from St Thomas Becket. The bishop with a mitre could either represent the first-century Bishop of Rome, Pope Clement I, or the twelfth-century Bishop of Canterbury, St Thomas. Can we assume that the reliquary equally represented all three of these relics or – because of its shape – at least the two bishops? This is unlikely, as looking at medieval lists of reliquaries, it seems that if a reliquary is to be identified according to its contents, then only *one* saint (or group of saints like the 11,000 Virgins) is mentioned – even if the reliquary includes the relics of several other saints as well.

The most prestigious relic in this small episcopal bust is the one from the Tomb of Christ, hence it is mentioned first. A power struggle

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[858] Wrangel 1923, 19; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 39.

[859] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94–95.

[860] Stratford 2012, 376; Liebgott 1982, 177; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 58–59.

of sorts happens between the relics contained in the reliquary. The priority of the Christ relic is bypassed by the unambiguous visual message of the reliquary's shape – it was immediately recognisable as a bishop's head. But if the shape had not been described in the list, the fact that the tomb relic is mentioned first would make the reliquary seem like an object meant primarily to represent a relic of Christ. If it had the form of a cross, a casket, or a monstrance, and with no illustrations referring to the saint, it would be hard to identify it with a particular saint. So it is precisely such figural or textual references to the saint – particularly in the case of statuettes or busts, but also arms – that is crucial in establishing an identity for the object in the eyes of the audience.

There are actually several St Clements, but the most probable saints for this relic are the Bishop of Metz, and Pope Clement I (who also share the same feast day, 23 November). I am not aware of any medieval head reliquaries of St Clement, but if they existed, they might have been wearing a mitre, a papal tiara, or a crown (as depicted in several medieval wall paintings in Danish churches), or perhaps even a calot or biretta. St Clement (the pope) was popular in Denmark and, although he had no altars dedicated to him in Lund Cathedral, there were his relics in three reliquaries, two of which were apparently dedicated to him. As well as the bust, his relics could be found in a "a small silver vessel" (*parvo vase argenteo*) and a silver arm – in which a fragment of his finger bone seems to have been the main relic.[861]

St Thomas Becket was not a new saint for Lund, either. Two altars were dedicated to him in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and his relics were kept, according to the list, in five different reliquaries in Lund, but he was not the main saint in any of them and did not feature in their iconography.[862] The head reliquary of St Thomas Becket in Canterbury, however, was the archetype of all bishop reliquary busts. It is depicted in countless medieval pilgrimage badges.[863] It probably served as a model for other bust-reliquaries of St

[861] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94.
[862] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 59–63; 90; 94–95; 106.
[863] Spencer 1998, 102–119.

Thomas, and maybe for the lost bust in Lund. Few, if any, of the other busts contained fragments of his skull. In St Thomas's case, head-shaped reliquaries gain more significance from the fact that his martyrium involved being beheaded. The shrine and relics of St Thomas in Canterbury Cathedral were among the most famous and frequently visited pilgrimage sites in the Middle Ages, until they were destroyed in 1538, during the reign of Henry VIII. Various other reliquaries of St Thomas are preserved, however, such as the *champlevé* enamel caskets made in Limoges, of which there are dozens depicting the beheading of St Thomas.[864]

Although St Clement is mentioned first, I would put more weight on the fact that St Thomas is described in more detail – *arciepiscopo*, *cantuarensi*, *martire*, which implies that the author of the Lund list had reasons to pay more attention to him. In the light of all this, he would seem more plausible than St Clement as the bishop represented by the bust in Lund, although there is no mention of the bust's origins in the list. As Thomas was an English saint, and the bishop's head was listed directly after the two presents from the King of England, it seems reasonable to wonder whether it could also have come from the court of Henry IV – the English king did, after all, have St Thomas' relics in several bishop-shaped reliquaries in his own house chapel[865].

The combination of valuable materials, exclusive craftsmanship and a three-dimensional, recognisable, anthropomorphic shape, inviting a 'personal encounter' with the saint, would suggest that the two busts were among the most venerated reliquaries in Lund. They would have received more attention from churchgoers than other kinds of reliquaries. The bust of St Lawrence had the additional prestige of representing the Cathedral's patron saint, whose presence in the church and its cult life was already strong. As for the episcopal bust, its initial reception was probably different – but the reliquary's arrival must have made the saint it represented more prominent in the church.

[864] Robinson 2011, 98.
[865] Stratford 2012, 32, 78, 378, 406.

**The Healing and Travelling Head of St Birgitta**

In Vadstena, St Birgitta's head, or skull – possibly in a head-shaped reliquary – was not only displayed for veneration and carried in processions,[866] but also used for healing. In one healing miracle, it was placed against the head of a possessed woman, and a Birgittine silver cross relic placed on her chest.[867] According to a later anecdote, the skull was still being used in the same way after the Reformation, too: in 1593, it was taken out – either from the new shrine or from a storage such as the sacristy, in a reliquary of its own (the source does not specify) – and placed on the main altar for healing a man possessed.[868]

Despite its fame, the way it was displayed is not known. Was the skull indeed kept in a head-shaped reliquary? The absence of a bust in the confiscation lists for Vadstena makes it unlikely it would have been of metal, but it is also possible that the Vadstena nuns managed to hide it before the confiscations. St Birgitta's head could have been kept in a wooden bust or a skilfully embroidered silk reliquary (like the "silk head of Turku", see below), considering the well-known talent of the Vadstena embroiderers. Another option could be that it was an embroidered pyx like the ones from Vadstena, now kept at the Historical Museum in Stockholm – at least one of which we know was made for a skull relic. Nevertheless, considering Birgitta's importance as a saint and the fact that the heyday of her cult coincided with the heyday of bust reliquaries – it would be very surprising if no bust reliquary had been made for her.

If such a bust did exist, could it have been brought to the church Council of Constanz (1414–1418), to be present when St Birgitta was officially declared saint? In the fifteenth-century chronicle of this meeting, by Ulrich von Richental, there is a drawing (see image 36) depicting this very ceremony: we see Peder Lykke, Bishop of Ribe (later Archbishop of Lund), standing among ten other clerics and holding a

[866] Lindblom 1963, 19–20; SRS III:2, 271–273.

[867] *Uppenbarelser*, nr. 26. St Birgitta had brought the cross back from Jerusalem, where she had made it into a contact relic through contact with Christ's grave.

[868] Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 71.

bust reliquary of a nun.[869] The figure has a veil covering her hair and neck and a decorative quatrefoil window in the middle of her chest. The lower edge of the bust is decorated by two horizontal lines and, between them, a row of gems or other small details. According to the text, the ten theologians were summoned to attest that St Birgitta's visions were not heretical, which was necessary for the sanctity to be validated. The chronicle text does not refer to any images or reliquaries, but busts and reliquaries are featured in several of its illustrations. They are sketched generically, without recognisable characteristics, but could the reliquaries – and particularly busts – of all the saints expecting confirmation have been brought to the event to be physically present? Or could a series of busts have been commissioned for the present relics to celebrate the occasion? I have not found any other indications of this, but I would not exclude the possibility. In any case, reliquaries were brought to be present at certain medieval gatherings, such as the Council of Charroux in 989, as Cynthia Hahn has noted.[870] Another interpretation of the images is that the chronicler included the busts as symbolic representations of the declared saints. However, a further study of the history of the council and the chronicle might bring better insights on the illustrations and the illustrated events.

It has been claimed that St Birgitta's skull ended up in a French church in 1645.[871] Meanwhile, the sarcophagus in Vadstena still contains two skulls, one of which has been venerated as Birgitta's.[872] Both ought to have been inside different reliquaries during the Middle

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[869] Feger / Richental 1964, 33r. -In one of the different illustrations of the same passage, the bust is crowned, which might be because in some versions of the text, Birgitta is referred to as "queen". On the illustrations depicting the canonisation of St. Birgitta and her reliquary bust in different versions of Richental's Chronicle, see Wacker 2002, 73-75; 164-167, and the illustrations 35–37.

[870] Hahn 2012, 157.

[871] Ballet-master Antoine de Beaulieu claimed to have taken the skull from her sarcophagus and given it to a count who brought it to the church of Courson-Les-Carrières in France, and a skull perceived as St Birgitta's relic has indeed been venerated there ever since. Bygdén–Gejvall–Hjortsjö 1954, 76–77.

[872] Lindblom 1963, 27–32. The two remaining skulls have been venerated as the skulls of Birgitta and Katarina, but a DNA /$C_{14}$ analysis in 2010 showed the skulls could not be theirs: one was too old, the other too new. See Nilsson & Possnert & Edlund & Budowle & Kjellström & Allen 2010.

Ages, if they are relics at all. Of other heads venerated in Vadstena, they could, for instance, be two of the 11,000 Virgins' heads, each of which might have originally come in their own reliquary,[873] or the heads of St Katarina and St Ingrid; the latter was brought to Vadstena in 1544.[874] St Katarina's skull was placed in a "kar", whose form we do not know, and her jaw in a crystal reliquary. However, the most highly valued one among those holy heads in Vadstena was certainly the head of St Birgitta, and thus it must have had a reliquary of its own – probably a bust, even if it may not have travelled all the way to the Council of Constanz.

In the light of the recent suggestion by Eva Lindqvist Sandgren (discussed above in the chapter on pyxes),[875] it seems possible that St Birgitta's skull may initially have been placed in an embroidered pyx, made in Vadstena, which was later reappropriated for the skull of St Katherine. This would mean that a new reliquary was made for St Birgitta's skull before the translation of St Katherine. A plausible moment for that would be the transferral of her body to the new silver shrine in 1412 (see the chapter on the Vadstena shrines).

To conclude, considering the prominent and active role of the head of St Birgitta in the liturgical life of Vadstena abbey, it must have had a reliquary of its own, and it seems at least two different reliquaries were made for it, the first of them apparently an embroidered pyx. Judging from the absence of any mentions of a silver head reliquary in the surviving written documentation from Vadstena, the new reliquary was probably made of wood; if the illustration in the Constanz chronicle is to be taken seriously, it would have been shaped as a bust. If finished until 1412 in synchrony with the silver shrine, the bust would also have made it in time to be present, in the hands of bishop Peder Lykke, in her canonisation at the Council of Constanz.

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[873] As many as five heads of the 11 000 Virgins were supposedly in Vadstena; on this, see below in the section of the Eleven thousand Virgins.

[874] St Ingrid of Skänninge's skull and other relics were brought to Vadstena in 1544; they are now in the sarcophagus, according to Fröjmark 1992, 72–73, and Bygdén–Gejvall–Hjortsjö 1954, 55; 72–75; 91.

[875] Lindqvist Sandgren 2018, 40–54.

**The Shining Head of St Lucius**

From probably as early as the 12th century, Roskilde Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Denmark was blessed by the protective presence of the head of its patron saint – the martyred third-century pope, St Lucius. According to medieval sources, the precious relic was inside a reliquary of gold or gilded silver, encrusted with gems.[876] The reliquary no longer exists, but the skull and its yellowish silk cap or pouch do.

Although the written references do not explicitly mention the shape of the reliquary, it is thought to have been a bust. This has been thoroughly discussed in two art historical articles: in 1874 by Henry Petersen, who focused on the history of the skull relic; and more recently, in 2017 by Lena Liepe, who places it in the context of the spiritual experience of the medieval visitors to Roskilde Cathedral. What has changed in the nearly 150 years between the two articles is the relic's location and the perspective. Essentially there is no further information, but there have been new insights. The aim of this section is to contribute to the discussion by focusing on how the reliquary has been perceived and depicted.

The skull relic is first described as shining brightly – a common trope concerning relics, but this description could also be applied to the light reflected from the bright, polished surface of a golden or silver reliquary. The breviary lesson for the feast of St Lucius in Roskilde tells the history of how the relic was discovered: two Roskilde canons were sent to Rome to look for a patron saint for their church. At Santa Cecilia in Trastevere, they were drawn to Lucius' skull because it was "whiter than any other and shining like the rays of the sun". The canons received it as a donation from the pope and brought it home "enclosed in a suitable container" – the shape or material of which is not mentioned. On the way back to Denmark, the relic already began to perform miracles such as calming a storm.[877] In the cathedral's wall paintings, depicting the relic's journey to Denmark, it is depicted as a skull wrapped in cloth without a reliquary. The main altarpiece from 1498, no longer preserved, also

[876] DK, Roskilde, 1638–1639.

[877] Petersen 1874, 417–418; Liepe, forthcoming.

included a scene from the translation of Lucius – *Miraculum de mirabili translatione capitis Sti Lucii*; while another side altarpiece, from 1521, depicted his decapitation – *decollatio S. Lucii papae et martyris,* and the miraculous journey of his head to Denmark – *translatio capitis S. Lucii papae et martyri*.[878] Those paintings are nowadays only known from a seventeenth-century woodcut and an eighteenth-century copper print, but they attest to the central role of the relic for the cathedral. Both notably present the head without a reliquary, which may simply be a narrative choice – concentrating on the real treasure rather than its man-made reliquary – but it is also possible that the relic was brought as such and the reliquary was only commissioned after its arrival in Roskilde.

The existing skull relic may well be the one described in the legend. After losing its reliquary to confiscations in the 16th century, the relic itself remained in the cathedral, protected only by its silk pouch – in other words, in the same state as it is depicted in the painting of its arrival from Rome. The relic was eventually removed from the cathedral and included in the curiosity collection of the royal Kunstkammer in 1655, and later incorporated in the current National Museum's collection. In 1908, the holy relic was finally returned to the religious context where it still lies, albeit a different church and town – the Catholic Cathedral of St Ansgar in Copenhagen. From 1910, it was also placed inside its own, new reliquary bust – made for it in Cologne.[879] In 2014, the skull was $C_{14}$ and strontium-dated, and although it turned out to be some decades too recent to match the registered life period of Pope Lucius, it is easily old enough to be the same skull that was venerated as St Lucius when the church was dedicated to him.[880]

The yellow silk cap that had been protecting the skull did not accompany it in the new bust reliquary but stayed in Copenhagen, where it is now on display in the National Museum. The silk is woven in an animal pattern and has fragments of a gold brocade selvedge. Although the cap is sewn to fit the size of the skull, it does not follow

[878] DK, Roskilde Domkirke, 1657–1660.
[879] Liepe, forthcoming.
[880] Arneborg et al. 2015, 148.

or imitate the shape, but is more like a cap sitting on top. Judging from the seams and the fragment of brocade, it could be that the cap has been clumsily repaired or reshaped.[881] The silk is apparently from fourteenth-century Southern Europe, so it dates from more recently than the skull or the assumed twelfth-century reliquary.[882] There is also the possibility that it was used as the substitute for an earlier, possibly worn-out piece of textile.

The reliquary seems to have been confiscated during the Reformation despite the eloquent plea written by the theologian, Poul Helgesen, against its confiscation in 1534. He admitted that most other silver items, such as chalices, could be taken, but that this treasure should be saved. It seems he managed to save the relic, but the reliquary cannot be found in any sources afterwards.[883]

As mentioned above, the existing written sources do not comment on the shape of the lost reliquary for St Lucius' head. Some visual sources do, however: three different seal stamps from Roskilde Cathedral show an episcopal bust.[884] In one provost's stamp from the 14th century, this seems even more apparent than in the other two: the bust – placed on top of a canopy with two angels pulling aside a cloth to reveal it – is framed by a vault in a church with the words *Beatus Lucius* above it. Provost Peder Saxesen is depicted kneeling under the canopy, praying to the bust above. In the second (a twelfth-century walrus tusk seal stamp of the Roskilde chapter), the bust is seen framed by a cathedral building, sporting a papal tiara or crown, and holding a book in the right hand and palm leaf (a martyr's sign) in the left. The words *Lucius Papa* are written around this image. Finally, a canon's stamp from the 15th century is the simplest of the three – with only an episcopal bust and the text *Caput Sancti Lucii*.[885]

The seals are not ultimate proof of the bust's existence though. To begin with, it is uncertain if the seals depict the saint or his reliquary; and secondly, bust-like images are also common on seals and coins depicting saints with no known busts, and authorities other than

[881] Petersen 1874, 435.
[882] Arneborg et al. 2015, 145.
[883] Liepe, forthcoming.
[884] Petersen 1874, , 393–441.
[885] Petersen 1874, 397, 439, 440.

saints. For instance, the thirteenth-century seal of the Bishop of Stavanger bears a bust image of a bishop with the text *Sigillum Swithuni*,[886] but as there are no known references to a head relic of the diocese's patron St Swithun, the image can hardly refer to a bust reliquary. However, in the case of St Lucius, there are additional reasons to believe there was a reliquary bust. He was actively venerated and depicted in several paintings and in the legend text, and the thematic significance of the head was further increased by the detail in the legend stating that St Lucius, like St Thomas, was beheaded. Although the 12th century is early for this kind of reliquary, it is not impossible; as the first of the Roskilde seals mentioned above depicts a bust and also dates back to the 12th century.

On the seal stamps, the bust is depicted with different kinds of headwear, but which was it? In the twelfth-century seal of Roskilde chapter, the bishop's head is "crowned" by a row of dots that could either be a tonsure, or a simple tiara or crown; while in the other two, the bishop wears a mitre. Meanwhile, the bust of 1910 shows St Lucius wearing a papal three-crown tiara, which does not feature in any of the seals. A tiara of the same type, however, is also seen in two painted images of St Lucius in Roskilde Cathedral – one from the 15th century and the other from 1511. The maker of the new bust may have been inspired by the paintings, but it does not seem too far-fetched to think that, in their portrayal of St Lucius, the medieval painters would also have let themselves be influenced by an already much-venerated bust that existed in the same church.

The reliquary is described in two documents. The lesson for the day of St Lucius in the 1517 breviary describes the relic as being "wrapped" in its golden reliquary with precious stones (*gemmis atque purissimo aureo scrinio obvolutus*), and being carried in a solemn procession when his help was needed to safeguard against illness, war, storm or other hardships.[887] In 1534, in his plea for the preservation of the relic, Poul Helgesen describes the skull as *argentea sed tenui qvidem bractea verumtamen inaurata circumdata* – enclosed in thinly gilded silver. Both Petersen and Liepe interpret the two

[886] Thorkelin 1786, tab. VII.

[887] SRD III, 617; Petersen 1874, 404–407.

different descriptions as an indication of two separate reliquaries: one, smaller and perhaps head-shaped (for keeping on the altar), and the other larger (for carrying in processions).[888] In my view, however, the differences between the two descriptions are not significant enough to assume this. As already shown by the Nordic reliquary lists and other texts, the same object can be described in very divergent ways in different documents. The word *scrinio* is typically used of a shrine or casket, but even then there is a degree of diversity. For the author of the lesson, *scrinio* might have been the default word for any reliquary. As for there being a separate reliquary for processional use, I am sceptical of the idea of two reliquaries for the same relic. If the bust was costly and impressive, a procession would have been the primary occasion to exhibit it. Smaller shrines could be taken out of larger, non-portable shrines for processional use, but I have not found support in any of the medieval sources for the hypothesis that a relic was swapped from one reliquary to another for processions. Instead, as Liepe has rightly pointed out, more than one reliquary may well have been made for the skull relic, but over the centuries, so that one would substitute the other, rather than be used alongside each other.[889]

**The Numerous Heads of the 11,000 Virgins**

Relics related to St Ursula and her eleven thousand martyred companions were numerous, spreading from Cologne to the surrounding areas, also to the Nordic countries. The vast availability of their relics made them popular; they are actually among the most widely dispersed head relics in European churches, and consequently, the majority of European reliquary busts represent them. As Ursula was the central figure in the group and often the only one mentioned by name, many relics in the group were finally named after her. However, relics named after the "11,000 Virgins" are also common, and several of Ursula's saintly companions are known by name, for instance St Osilia, St Euphrosina, and St Cordula (these three are also included in the relic list of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen), St

[888] Helgesen 1827 (1523), 142–143; Petersen 1874, 436; Liepe, forthcoming.
[889] Liepe, forthcoming.

Pinnosa and St Gregoria. There are also some male and child saints among the companions of St Ursula.[890]

The most intense period for producing wooden reliquary busts in Cologne continued for more than a century, approximately from 1260 to 1360 (according to other sources until even the first half of the 15th century), and wooden reliquary busts were still being made in this area in the 16th century. Several sculptors and workshops were involved, which can be seen from the variation. The busts of different periods and sculptors have been classified into seventeen types, but certain characteristics are always common to Cologne busts, which makes them relatively easy to recognise. The features of the face, the slightly Gothic smile and the hair bear a certain stylized simplicity; almost as if one could say that they were siblings if they were alive. The dress and hair are usually gilt; most of the busts do not have any foot or base; and the relics are visible through trefoil or quatrefoil windows without glass, placed in the chest. Art historian Joan Holladay has suggested that the enormous production of these busts, "life-sized women in fashionable contemporary dress", was related to the increase of both convents and beguine houses in Cologne. They were, however, purchased for monasteries as well.[891]

Whether this connection between the female busts and female religiosity was reflected in the purchases and usage of the virgin busts in the North is not clear, but they did exist in large numbers in the Nordic churches and abbeys, too. The Cistercian Abbey of Esrum in Denmark might have had the earliest and largest collection of heads of the 11,000 Virgins in the area. In the twelfth-century, Archbishop Eskil of Lund supposedly arranged for the translation of thirteen heads to the altar dedicated to the Virgins at the abbey church.[892] The presence of these heads – probably in bust reliquary form – was remarkable, and not only to the eye. An active performance of the thirteen heads was witnessed in Esrum: once, after the Christmas Eve Matins, the heads of the virgins on the high altar began to sing, responding to the *Te Deum Laudamus* sung

[890] Montgomery 2010, 9–17.
[891] Holladay 1997, 67–71.
[892] Crombach 1647, 668; cited also by Gad 1980, 372.

by the monks.[893] The source for these two references to the thirteen heads in Esrum is a German seventeenth-century account of the miracles of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins, based on an earlier, Carthusian manuscript from Cologne. Remaining medieval documents, however, do not support these notions; they only testify that Eskil consecrated an unnamed altar in 1158 and that an altar dedicated to the virgins was founded in Esrum around the year 1485. The high altar was dedicated to the Virgin Mary.[894] Yet, there must be reasons for the perceived strong connection between Esrum and the Cologne busts. The scarcity of remaining sources from the 12th century may disguise the earlier existence of a cult to the virgins and altar dedicated to them. How would those thirteen heads have been arranged "on" the altar? An aumbry-type altarpiece with thirteen niches seems to me the most plausible option.

Visby, the capital of Gotland, could be considered the second centre for the cult of the 11,000 Virgins in the Nordic area. In 1286, the monk and writer Petrus de Dacia of the Dominican Abbey there wrote to his friends in Stommeln, near Cologne, and asked them to keep "the heads of the virgins" for him as agreed.[895] The following year, he travelled to Cologne and returned with eleven head relics. No references to their reliquaries have been found, but Petrus describes the circumstances of their acquisition. During his one-month trip to Cologne, he visited the Convent of the 11,000 Virgins, for whom he had a "special devotion", and experienced a miraculous healing of his heart problems.[896] He acquired nine of the virgins' heads and one that had belonged to the martyrs of the Theban legion – those must have been the heads he had asked to be reserved for him. Finally, before his

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[893] "*eo si M. S. veteri Carthusiano Coloniensi fides sit tribuenda, tredecim Parthenicae sodalitatis huius caluariae sunt translatae, quae cum decenter ornatae fuissent aris impositae, nocte Natalis Dominici (sic), dum Matutinis absolutis hymni Ambrosiani primus versus, praecinente Praefecto Monasterij cantatus esset a Religiosis: alterum* Te aeternum patrem, *tredecim capita suavissimo caelestique concentu cecinerunt."* Crombach 1647, 668; Montgomery 2010, 29, quotes a French book repeating the same story in 1656.

[894] Gad 1980, 371; DK: Esrum, 1042.

[895] "*Capita virginum, de quibus michi scripsistis, michi conseruate*.", Asztalos 1991, 394. See also Petrus de Dacia 1896, 233, "*reliquias sanctorum michi promisistis*."

[896] *Uita B. Christinae Stumbelensis*, 151; 244. In my recent article (Lahti 2017), I mistakenly wrote that Petrus had purchased the skulls at the abbey; however, his published letters do not explicitly state this.

return to Sweden, he received one more head from a beguine friend in Stommeln; her brother, a local dean, walked to Cologne and back overnight with the head "round his neck" to deliver it to Petrus. This last gift must have had a particular meaning for Petrus, as he sent the other heads home separately, but carried the eleventh one home on his person. His journey back took him via Lübeck, and along the way he remarked on "a lovely emotion" that carrying the head brought with it.[897] Petrus does not mention the shape of the objects, but as stated above, the word "head" in medieval treasure lists often refers to a reliquary of that shape.[898] The fact that he was carrying the head like a (very large) pendant round his neck would seem to indicate, however, that it was not a bust, but perhaps wrapped or sewn into a silk pouch – which was the usual protection for relics.[899] Upon arrival in Visby, the most likely place for the skulls would have been the Dominican abbey church of St Nicholas. Unfortunately there are no extant medieval inventories from there.

Although head and bust reliquaries were the trademark of this saintly group, other relics of the 11,000 Virgins are even more common than their heads. They have been placed together, in smaller fragments, with many others in reliquary caskets, monstrances and other "collective reliquaries". In Sweden alone, their relics were venerated in more than twenty churches.[900] An example of how their relics could be bought by "postal order", based on active marketing, is preserved from Sweden. In 1288, Strängnäs Cathedral purchased several recently found relics of the 11,000 Virgins (of Saints Odilia, Kristina, Emma and the entire body of St Basilia) from the Augustinian monastery in Paris. The discovery of these and other Cologne relics by a brother of the Paris monastery was announced by the Cologne chapter in 1287, and confirmed in 1289 by the Archdeacon of Paris.[901] The motive for sending the announcement to

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[897] "*magnam cordis dulcedinem ex presencia illius capitis sepissime sensi*." Both the dean and Petrus, according to his description, carried the relic "round the neck" (*in collo*). Collijn 1936, 154–158; 231; Asztalos, 1991, 320–325; see also Paulson 1896, 151; 154.

[898] Braun, 1940, 64–65.

[899] For more on the practices and reasons for wrapping the relics, see Bagnoli 2014, 100–109.

[900] Pegelow 2006, 325.

[901] SDHK 1419; 1383; 1443.

Swedish church authorities seems to have been to let them know that these relics were now available for purchase, though not stated directly.[902] The ten heads that Petrus de Dacia got hold of in 1287 were apparently not part of the Augustinian's discovery, as Petrus's friends had gathered them for him already the previous year. There were several St Ursula relics in Denmark as well. The relic trade was lucrative, but it did not exhaust Cologne's own collections of the 11,000 Virgins. To this day, the town still has a substantial amount of their relics in sumptuous reliquaries, particularly in St Ursula's Church.

As illustrated by the above cases, the 11,000 Virgins were a saintly collective whose essential attribute, apart from the busts, was the group itself.[903] In the Nordic area, their heads often appear in pairs. My interpretation is that the general perception of them as a group resulted in people wanting to buy several heads at once; if resources did not permit people to buy more than two, then two was still better than a single head. Two such heads, in crowned wooden busts, are included in the 1346 will of King Magnus Eriksson and Queen Blanche of Sweden, among numerous other reliquaries and church treasures to be donated to Vadstena Abbey.[904] Two more – perhaps in busts as well, although no reliquaries are mentioned – were brought to Vadstena by two Birgittine brothers in 1515, and a fifth was donated to the abbey as late as in 1579 by the papal legate, Antonio Possevino.[905] The fact that the names were omitted is not unusual – the group identity was sufficient.[906]

Two heads of the 11,000 Virgins were included in the relic collection of the church of Our Lady of Copenhagen – they are listed as "entire heads", one with a crown, the other without. They are registered in the beginning of the reliquary list for the feast of relics (*festum reliquiarum*) – preceded only by a large cross containing a relic of the True Cross.[907] Their position at the top of the list would indicate that they played an important role in this celebration, but unlike other reliquaries in the list,

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[902] Thordeman 1958, 166-172.
[903] Montgomery 2010, 1–8.
[904] (--) *tu. huwuþ af ællyuu þusand iumfru lagþ. i tu træhuwuþ med kronum,* SDHK 5307.
[905] *DV* 1034; Andersson 1983, 94.
[906] Montgomery 2010, 32.
[907] Liebgott 1982, 118; SRD VIII, 260; 267; Gad 1980, 371.

these heads are only given the briefest of descriptions. While the other reliquary descriptions usually begin with the type and material of the reliquary, ending with a list of the relics inside, the two heads are listed without any further details. Mentioning a crown implies that the item was a head-shaped reliquary, and that the other must have been head-shaped as well, but otherwise it is almost as if the reliquaries were so intimately associated with their contents that there was no need to perceive them as separate items. They represented the heads of the two holy virgins, and contained them – and as a result, they *were* the heads of the two virgins.

An exception to this rule of pairs – and possibly of the head-shaped reliquaries – existed in the Franciscan Friary of Copenhagen. According to the friary's reliquary list, one *scrinio* only contained the head of St Petrissa, who was one of the 11,000 Virgins. Unlike most other reliquaries in the list, it contained no other relics.[908] The use of the word *scrinio* does not necessarily mean this was a casket reliquary, because the inventory is otherwise irregular in its listing of reliquaries: the descriptions are vague, and in some cases, the reliquary is not mentioned at all before the list of its contents. However, a skull in a silk wrap, kept in a casket to be taken out during feast days, is a possible option.

Roskilde Cathedral had several head relics as well, among them the heads of two of the 11,000 Virgins – Euphrosina and Florentia. Interestingly, their bodies were venerated in two large shrines in Lund Cathedral. The probability that they had their own, head-shaped reliquaries in Roskilde is increased by the fact that the heads were highly valued there: in the cathedral's thirteenth-century calendar, their translation was commemorated (14.7, *translatio 2 capitum XI.M. virginum*), and the tradition continued right up until the Reformation. As Jexlev has commented, the fact that they were known by name, as the heads of two specific individual saints, instead of generic representatives of the 11,000 Virgins, also made them more prestigious than the pairs of anonymous heads in other Nordic churches.[909] Another pair of heads of the 11,000 Virgins seems to have

[908] *In isto Scrinio est Caput Sanctae Petrissae Virginis de Societate XI milium Virginum.* SRD VIII, 289.
[909] Jexlev 1976, 31–36. Gad 1980, 371.

appeared in Roskilde cathedral in late 15th century, when Queen Dorothea deposited them in her private chapel there.[910]

There is no surviving information to specify whether all or some of the virgin heads in Roskilde were in the typical wooden reliquary busts – unless the following anecdote about two wooden heads is considered to have a grain of truth. An eighteenth-century anecdote about Roskilde Cathedral claims that there were "during the Catholic times", i.e., in the Middle Ages, two wooden heads nailed to the main altar and that their function was to nod when people were absolved of their sins – someone would move the heads with an attached metal wire.[911] The inspiration for this story could have been the sight of wooden reliquary busts; it is quite unlikely that any other wooden heads would have been kept on the altar. To nail something to a holy altar would not have been acceptable, so that part of the story must be the result of misunderstanding or pure fiction. Catholic liturgical objects and practices might have looked odd in the eyes of an outsider, and a humorous explanation was thus invented, mocking the religiosity of olden times. The basis of the story might have been an eyewitness account, gradually transformed in being told and retold over the two centuries that had passed since the Reformation. If the anecdote was medieval in origin, it could be interpreted as a sign of the experienced active presence of the saints just like the account of the hymn-singing heads in Esrum. As a medieval religious experience, it was not uncommon to witness speaking, moving, crying, or bleeding images of saints in church.

Some of those pairs, presented in different documents, might in fact be identical: changes in royal or ecclesiastic alliances could demand rearrangements and replacements of church treasures. For instance, the reliquaries mentioned in the royal will of 1346 might have been deposited in other churches and chapels across Sweden at the time of the will being written.[912]

The destinies of the numerous head reliquaries of these holy virgins in the Nordic countries are unknown – and why one of them survived

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[910] DK: Roskilde Domkirke, 1640; Gad 1980, 371-372.
[911] DK: Roskilde Domkirke, 1657.
[912] Fritz 2003, 285–296.

in Sigtuna is equally hard to say. Reliquaries were often among the first items to be removed from churches during the Reformation, but there are no documents indicating they were actually destroyed. The church silver was far more interesting to the confiscators than these wooden sculptures. Only one such head can be found in the confiscation documents: "the crowned head of St Ursula" (*ett Vrsula huffud med Crona*), was confiscated from Porvoo Church (Borgå), Finland in 1535.[913] That the head was identified as St Ursula is in itself exceptional: only a few saints are mentioned by name in the confiscation lists. Källström has interpreted the head as a reliquary, and I agree; practically all head-shaped sculptures in medieval churches were reliquaries.[914] The fact that most reliquary busts indeed represented St Ursula and her companions might have played a role in her name appearing on the confiscation lists, as a bust of a female saint would be immediately associated with her. The majority of St Ursula busts are wooden, but the one in Porvoo must have been one of the exceptions if it caught the attention of confiscators looking for gold and silver items. Like some of the virgin busts in Cologne,[915] it must have had a metal surface – either a gilding or mask – over a wooden core.

Silver busts of St Ursula from France can be found in Europe, too. The intense stare of their polychromed eyes in a shining metal face might explain why one of them was mistaken for a pagan idol in an early fourteenth-century report of a trial against the Templars.[916] As Camille puts it, based on his impression of these South-European

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[913] Leinberg 1892,1.

[914] Braun 1940, 64–65.

[915] See Urbanek 2010, 162–165.

[916] For French silver busts, see Montgomery 2010, fig. 13; Torriti 2010, 25–31. In the Templar case, a silver reliquary bust of St Ursula is taken for an object of Templar idolatry in the early fourteenth century, in an anecdote told by Camille 1991 (1989), 275–276 (originally quoted from Barber 1978; see Barber 1993, 163): "a certain large beautiful silver-gilt head, shaped like that of a woman, within which were the bones of a single head, rolled-up and stitched in a certain white linen cloth, red muslin having been placed over it, and there was sewn in there a certain document on which was written "capud LVIII", and the said bones were considered as similar to the bones of the head of a small woman, and it was said by some that it was the head of one of the eleven thousand virgins." -The description of the wrapped skull inside also matches the way relics are wrapped inside reliquaries or, in the case of the silk skull reliquaries, as such.

metal busts: "[e]xtant examples of head reliquaries are indeed rather disturbing decapitated objects whose metallic hollowness made them ideal sites for the entry of demonic forces."[917] The same cannot be said of the wooden Ursula busts in Cologne or the wooden head reliquary from Sigtuna – on the contrary, the heads seem mild and friendly. The textile reliquaries of skull parts do not lend themselves to comparison with the metal heads, either. As Nordic metal heads are only mentioned or suggested in written documents, they must be imagined, but I would not base the mental reconstruction on their "demonic" aspects.

**Saint Henrik's Head and Arms in Silver**

In Turku Cathedral, the head and arms of Henrik, the local patron saint, were either together in one reliquary or in three separate body-part reliquaries. As with St David's reliquaries, the medieval sources leave the exact shape unspecified. A sixteenth-century document implies a silver head and two silver arms, but the shape or quantity cannot be confirmed from any available sources.

The silver head and arms of St Henrik are only known through a sixteenth-century chronicle about the bishops of Turku, written by Bishop Paulus Juusten. According to the chronicle, silver reliquaries of St Henrik's head and arms were commissioned (*caput et brachia beati Henrici argentea facta sunt*) by Bishop Magnus II Tavast (ca. 1375–1452), possibly during his visit to Venice in around 1420, when he purchased various ecclesiastic utensils.[918] In the contemporaneous document of the church silver confiscated from Turku Cathedral, the body-part reliquaries are absent, and instead, the reliquary of St Henrik is called 'a gilt silver monstrance'. Could the chronicle and the confiscation document be referring to the same object or objects? They could be unrelated, but the absence of the head and arms from the confiscation list makes one wonder what happened to them.[919]

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[917] Camille 1991, 275–276.

[918] Palola 1997, 199. Juusten 1988, 58. Lahti 2003, 9–10. The birth year of Magnus has been estimated to be in the 1370s, but before 1376. Palola 1997, 105–106; Juusten 1988, 60.

[919] Lahti 2006, 173–183. See also Lahti & Räsänen 2008, 246–252.

Omitting a description of the shapes of the reliquary (or reliquaries), both texts seem to concentrate instead on the precious material the item was made from. For the confiscator, paying attention to weight and material above all other details was a duty; and for Bishop Paulus Juusten, silver was an indicator of the wealth and generosity of his respected predecessor, Bishop Magnus Tavast.[920] The weight of the monstrance of St Henrik was remarkable, at over 25 *lödiga mark* (over 5kg), it was one of the heaviest silver reliquaries confiscated in the Nordic area, and from one of the poorest dioceses.[921]

The expression *argentea facta* could theoretically refer to anything from a new silver object (or three) to an older, wooden head and arm reliquary covered or replaced by silver ones.[922] Judging from the results of Braun's comparative studies, the words *caput et brachia*, as used in Bishop Juusten's chronicle, would refer directly to the body-part reliquaries, not the relics.[923] Thus Juusten's sentence should be translated as "the head and arm reliquaries of St Henrik were made of silver".

I see three possible explanations for the discrepancy between these two documents. In the first hypothesis, the situation would have changed before the confiscations: the silver head and arms were stolen or melted and a new, transparent reliquary – a monstrance, to allow a better visibility of the relics – was made in order to comply with the changing aesthetic and devotional ideals. In the second hypothesis, there was simply a difference in terminology between the two authors, in which case the 'monstrance' actually refers to the same gilt silver object – in other words, the bust reliquary commissioned or bought by Magnus Tavast. The third option is that the original

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[920] Lahti 2006, 173–183.

[921] *"Ett Sancti Henrici monstrans förgylt..."*, Kammararkivet, röda nummerserien nr. 19, Sölvkammaren 1557-62. For comparison, the object known as "the large monstrance" from Uppsala weighed circa 2,8 kg, while a similar combination – the gilt "head and arms of St David" confiscated in Munktorp – weighed 4,5 kilograms together. See Källström 1939, 95; 117; 277.

[922] For a wooden reliquary bust with a later silver casting, see Boehm 1997, 11–13. One solution for combining a skull relic and valuable metal is the gilded skull of St Quentin; see Shortell 1997, 38.

[923] For more on *caput* and *brachium* as names of reliquaries in medieval inventory lists, see Braun 1940, 61–62, 64–65.

fifteenth-century reliquary for the skull of St Henrik was indeed a monstrance.[924] However, none of these options explain the fate of the arms, unless they never had reliquaries of their own and were contained within the same large reliquary as the skull. They may also have been disguised as other non-detailed objects in the confiscation list, or either hidden or stolen before the confiscations.[925]

As we have seen, the term 'monstrance' in medieval texts does not necessarily reveal the shape or size of the object; it was used to describe objects of various shapes and functions, but the vital element is that it would have a transparent crystal or glass container or a window.[926] If Bishop Henrik's 'monstrance' was a bust, it would have been one of the largest among the less than ten silver head reliquaries in Sweden, which must have enhanced the awe it inspired and its pivotal significance for the cathedral. If one reliquary had to enclose the three relics, it would most likely be a large bust – either a regular bust with a space for the arm bones below, or a less common half-figure bust, depicting the saint as far down as the waistline.

If the two silver arms did exist as well, it would have been unusual, but not impossible, to have them both in the same church.[927] Following fifteenth-century customs, they would have come with round or vertical windows.[928] Both the bust and the arms might have carried the episcopal symbols, such as the mitre and the bishop's ring,[929] representing St Henrik's liturgical functions and authority.

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[924] For a Venetian fifteeenth-century monstrance with a skull relic, see e.g. Steingräber 1971, 184; tavola CLXXX.

[925] There is documentary evidence about robberies in the cathedral; see DF 5398, 5433.

[926] About the uses of the term 'monstrance', see Belting 1981, 129–130; Braun 1940, 55–57; 220.

[927] Schmitt 1999, 151–152. From a different perspective on the above-discussed concept of *dextera Dei*, Schmitt associates the two right hands to the idea that saints and God could not have left hands, only right ones. Reliquary arms of the left hand do exist, but they are less common. For an example of the skull and two arms of a saint placed each in their own reliquary (now lost), see Shortell 1997, 38.

[928] For examples of Venetian thirteenth- to fifteenth-century arm reliquaries, see Hahnloser 1971, 145–148; tavola CXXVIII; Steingräber 1971, 184; tavola CLXXVIII.

[929] According to Cynthia Hahn, arm reliquaries of bishops were usually luxuriously dressed, imitating the hands of living bishops during liturgical actions; see also the chapter on arm reliquaries above. Hahn 1997a, 26–27. For a discussion of the gestures, contents, uses and meanings of arm reliquaries, see Hahn, passim.

References to St Henrik's legend might also have been inscribed according to Magnus Tavast's instructions in Venice or later in the home diocese.

As we have seen from the high aesthetic and technical quality of the Linköping arm reliquaries, the commissioning of something so ambitious would not have required travelling as far as Venice. Even in terms of style, Swedish and Venetian silver reliquaries were not extremely different from each other, as they both had German influences.[930] However, as the bishop had the opportunity and means to purchase Venetian craftsmanship, It is quite likely that he took that opportunity to add its extra prestige to the treasures of his own cathedral.

The bones from the reliquary (or reliquaries) of St Henrik may still exist. In 1924, two upper arm bones and a cranium were found hidden in a wall niche in the sacristy of Turku Cathedral, each of them wrapped in silk. They were immediately identified as relics due to the silk wrappings and a smell of incense, but there was no information as to their identities.[931] It is likely that they were placed there before or during the Reformation for safeguarding, yet excluded from the official cult.[932] It is tempting to identify them as the relics of St Henrik, and most researchers have done just that.[933]

One speculative conclusion could thus be that St Henrik's skull and arms were represented in Turku Cathedral by a silver bust or monstrance as well as two silver arm reliquaries with crystal windows, and they were made in Venice in the same period and style as the Linköping silver arms. In fact, Bishop Paulus Juusten's chronicle is the only known reference to Venetian church treasures

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[930] For more on German influences in Venetian silver, see Hahnloser 1971, 131–138; Steingräber 1971, 177–178.

[931] Rinne 1932, 273–300, 382–397. The only existing relic explicitly associated with St Henrik is a tiny knot wrapped in silk, and according to its *authentica,* also a fragment of the arm bone,(*de brachio sancti henrici*). It was probably once in a smaller reliquary, perhaps together with the other tiny relics found in the cathedral; see Rinne 1932, 365–381. For more on other known relics and reliquaries of St Henrik, see Hiekkanen 2003, 209; Heikkilä 2005, 102–112; Lahti 2007, 70–86; Heikkilä 2016, 238–245.

[932] See Tarlow 2003, 108–121; Tegnér 1997a, 134–139.

[933] Rinne 1932, 282–300; Nordman 1954, 309–311; Lahti 2006, 173–183; Hiekkanen 2003, 209, fn 972.

being brought to Nordic countries, although it is known that Magnus Tavast was not the only Nordic visitor to Venice at this time.

**The Scented Head of St Sunniva and Other Possible Heads**

Despite of the prestige attributed to head reliquaries, the memory of their existence has been as randomly susceptible to oblivion as the documents concerning any other medieval relics. In the absence of explicit sources, the presence of a head-shaped reliquary can be suspected – albeit not proved – when the head of a saint plays a central role in his or her legend or in other medieval documents. The existence of some of the head-shaped reliquaries discussed above, such as the one of St Birgitta, remains hypothetical even if probable.

As we have seen in the cases of those lost head reliquaries, the prominence of the skull relic in the legend is not a prerequisite for the existence of a head reliquary; in the case of St Thomas Becket, St Lucius or the Eleven thousand Virgins, for instance, there is a connection, while the head reliquaries of St Birgitta or St Lawrence could be seen more generally as signs of their cult value.

In addition to those hitherto discussed, a few more vague indications of head reliquaries can be found in medieval Nordic sources. On the other hand, a few objects that appear to be head reliquaries, yet anonymous, are mentioned in sixteenth-century documents. In this chapter, I speculate on ten such possible lost head reliquaries most of which have not previously been recognised or discussed as such.

A head relic of St Sunniva, in a head-shaped reliquary, may have been venerated on the Norwegian island of Selje. There are no existing references to a head reliquary of St Sunniva, but the way her head is described in the twelfth-century legend is striking – I find it likely that a material object should have existed at the root of the story. After Sunniva and her companions died in a landslide, merchants were sailing at night near the island of Selje. They were attracted to the island by a shining beam of light, which they found to be coming from a human head, accompanied by a lovely scent. They took the head with them and presented it to King Olaf Tryggvason and Bishop Sigurd, who recognised it as a holy relic and enshrined it "among

other holy relics".[934] This last detail in the story seems to imply that the head was not placed in a reliquary of its own, but it can also be read in a different way. The relic needed to be placed in a reliquary immediately; a reliquary was at hand, and so the relic was safe for the time being. It may have received a reliquary of its own later on. There seems to be a contradiction in the legend though, as Sunniva's body was found intact later on. If the legend is interpreted as a background narrative for relics and reliquaries, the finding of the head and the mention of the body being intact may be included for a reason. The notion of an intact body was probably important for the translation of her shrine to Bergen in 1170 – a headless body would not have been ideal. The cult in Selje continued, perhaps around a reliquary representing the shining head of St Sunniva. If the reliquary was shaped to represent her head, the relic inside it need not have been a skull – a fragment would have sufficed.

The theme of this severed head may also have been inspired by the legend of the fourth-century martyr St Alban, who was decapitated and whose head was part of the treasure of the Benedictine Abbey of St Alban in Selje. It is not known in what kind of reliquary his head was kept. Elements of the legend of St Alban were in fact inserted in a vernacular version of the Sunniva legend, written in around 1200. Ignoring the difference of 600 years, the author Odd claims that Alban was Sunniva's brother, whose relics stayed on Selje in the hands of local monks. As Thomas A. DuBois has observed, the insertion of St Alban into the legend may be based on Odd's knowledge of the fact that the head of St Alban was on Selje.[935] In fact, the legend does not even explicitly state that the shining head belongs to St Sunniva, which opens up an alternative interpretation. If no head reliquary of St Sunniva existed, the local audience might have associated the head that appears in Sunniva's legend as the existing and familiar head reliquary of St Alban. The existence of an earlier head relic on the island might also have functioned as a model for the relic cult that then developed around St Sunniva. I therefore suggest that either one

[934] For an English translation of the original, *Acta Sanctorum in Selio*, see DuBois 2008, 89–92.
[935] DuBois 2008, 69.

or both of the head reliquaries of St Sunniva and St Alban were located on Selje Island.

The identity or meaning of the head in the Sunniva tradition has, to my knowledge, not been properly discussed by scholars. At least two observations deserve to be made. Since an eleventh-century reference by Adam of Bremen, the legend of St Sunniva has been loosely associated with the legend of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins.[936] The reason for the association may simply be the notion of a Christian virgin travelling by ship, or it could have something to do with heads. The 11,000 Virgins are known for the numerous wooden, metal and textile head reliquaries that represent them. The trope of a shining head also brings to mind the legend of St Lucius, whose skull relic similarly announced itself by emitting light – and in his case, as we saw, the legend also corresponded to a head relic in a head-shaped reliquary, made of bright, light-reflecting material.

Another important and highly symbolic holy head – in a possible head reliquary – belongs to St Eric of Sweden. A will from 1360 seems to refer to a reliquary of his head in Uppsala Cathedral, but the interpretation is ambiguous. The archdeacon decided to give two marks of silver to the shrine of St Eric and a gem called *Solintaare* to decorate the head of "the same" (*pro scrineo beati Erici ij marchas puri et pro ornatu capitis ipsius vnam gemmam dictam solintaare*).[937] The ambiguous word is *ipsius*, which could refer to the shrine or the saint. Was the "solitary" gem for decorating the head of St Eric, in a reliquary of its own – head-shaped or not – or was it for decorating the "head of the shrine"? St Eric was certainly a saint for whose cult a head-shaped reliquary would have been fitting, but could such a reliquary representing the patron saint of Sweden have escaped confiscation or disappeared without leaving a trace in any other documents? In 1303, when St Eric's shrine was opened and inspected, his head was seen there together with the body.[938] Could the gem have been intended for a future head reliquary – one that had only been planned? Art historians Christian Lovén and Herman Bengtsson have

[936] DuBois 2008, 67–71.
[937] SDHK 7842.
[938] SDHK 2021.

come to the same hypothesis. Lovén suggests it may have been placed in the separate Chapel of St Eric in Uppsala, instead of the cathedral; however, the reasons for this suggestion are not mentioned.[939] In fact, if a head reliquary of the holy king did exist, I believe the cathedral would have been a more suitable place for it. Head reliquaries were items of high prestige, and it would have been, along with the shrine for his body, the main object of attention and veneration in the cult of St Eric. Internationally, head reliquaries of holy kings were prominent in royal rituals, such as the crowning of new rulers, and were often commissioned and donated by kings, who in doing so expressed their desire to be associated with their holy predecessor.[940] Against this background, the lack of explicit references to a head reliquary for any of the Nordic royal saints is all the more surprising. Nonetheless, their shrines – at least in the cases of St Olaf and St Eric – were very actively promoted, and were central in both religious and political rituals.

The gilt silver reliquaries for the head and arm of David of Munktorp have already been discussed in the context of arm reliquaries – as stated earlier, the combined weight is written in one entry, but that is not sufficient to prove that they were one object, as other confiscated silver items were sometimes lumped together like this as well. One should also bear in mind that reliquaries depicting two body-parts are generally not common, and that St David's head and arm together weighed nearly five kilos.[941] No information is preserved concerning any further details about the head reliquary. According to the eighteenth-century author Olof Grau, the relics and image of David were carried in procession on a bier, which still existed during Grau's lifetime.[942] Whether he could have meant the full-body shrine and the reliquary-images of the saint's head and arm is impossible to know. Carrying a wooden sculpture in procession, together with reliquaries, would not be out of the question, either.

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[939] Lovén 2004, 19.

[940] Montgomery 2014, 32–39.

[941] Källström 1939, 117; 222: "*Sankt Davids huvud och arm, 21 1/2 lmk*". Källström thinks it refers to two separate body-part reliquaries. Cf. Af Ugglas 1935, 22–24. For a sixteenth-century anecdote on papal legates taking St David's bones to Rome after the reliquaries had been confiscated, see Lundén 1944, 136–137.

[942] Lundén 1944, 138.

Västerås Cathedral had to give up an anonymous silver head to the confiscators, too.[943] The local saint of most importance there was St David, whose head seems to have stayed in Munktorp, but as several head reliquaries of the same saint were quite acceptable, the Västerås head reliquary might have been his as well. As mentioned in the preceding chapter on arm reliquaries, Västerås also had two anonymous arm reliquaries.

In Skara Cathedral, the head of the local bishop, St Brynolf, might have been a wooden bust with minor details in metal, since it is mentioned in the confiscation documents yet not confiscated – only a golden heart-shaped pendant, probably a votive, that was attached to it was taken.[944] The bust may have been made for his beatification in 1492, but Sven-Erik Pernler does not think the bust was a reliquary, based on the assumption that it would be unlikely to have the head and body of a saint in two separate reliquaries in the same church. However, such a division was not uncommon. St Katarina's relics were divided up in that way in Vadstena, and the same is likely to have been true for St David's relics in Munktorp, just as it was for St Henrik's relics in Turku. In addition to the head, these saints often got one or two arm reliquaries as well; but a medieval bust of a saint without relics would be less likely.[945] The gilt head of another venerated local bishop, St Eskil, belonged to the Eskilstuna Franciscan Abbey, where his body was buried.[946] Without further details, one can assume that both he and St Brynolf were portrayed wearing a mitre.

Another mitred silver head had yet to be commissioned in Linköping: according to the seventeenth-century historian Johannes Messenius, the funds collected in 1520 for a new silver reliquary of the local saint Nils Hermansson – interrupted as this was by the

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[943] Källström 1939, 117, 297 (weight 10 lmk 0,5 l = ca. 2,17 kg)

[944] Pernler 2004, 69–92; Källström 1939, 5; 61; 241; af Ugglas 1935, 23. Källström is rather critical of Ugglas' reading of several sources and blames him also for assuming that the head of St Brynolf was made of silver; however, Ugglas does not explicitly claim that, unless the fact of mentioning it in an article focused on silver artefacts is taken as a statement to the effect.

[945] A Nordic exception is Haaken Gulleson's bust of St John the Baptist, which does not have any exterior signs of containing relics. It is in the collections of the Hälsingland Museum in Sweden.

[946] Källström 1939, 169.

Reformation – were intended for making a head-shaped reliquary.[947] The planned new reliquary was probably meant to develop a cult that would push for his canonisation. It is not known whether Nils Hermansson's head was already being kept in a separate reliquary, but a passage in his canonisation seems to suggest his head was given particular importance: Katarina of Vadstena, who knew him personally, is purported to have exclaimed that never had a holier head entered Linköping Cathedral than that of Nils Hermansson.[948] Katarina, who died before him, could not have seen his head in a reliquary, of course, but it can be asked whether the author's choice of words was intended to draw attention to the head or underline the necessity of purchasing a reliquary for it. Unfortunately, it would be difficult to find out what was meant, as there is a gap in the text at the end of the sentence quoted.

The confiscation documents often omit the names of the saints. Växjö Cathedral had, until the confiscations, a "large white head", which was understood to mean a head reliquary of silver.[949] It might have been made for the local bishop, St Sigfrid, whose body lay in a reliquary shrine in the church until the 17th century; however, St Sigfrid's legend does not pay particular attention to his head. Instead, I would suggest that his legend evokes another interpretation – that the confiscated head may have belonged in a group of altogether three head reliquaries venerated in Växjö Cathedral. Three holy heads play a central role in the legend of St Sigfrid: his three missionary colleagues, also presented in some versions of the story as his nephews, had their heads cut off. St Sigfrid went to look for the heads, which shone brightly in the night, and found them floating in a wooden basin in a lake, resisting the weight of stones that had been bound to the basin in order to sink it. He took the holy heads tenderly in his arms; they were fresh and flawless as new and spoke to him in clear voices. St Sigfrid took them to the church and enshrined them

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[947] Messenius cites "Registratura Lincopensi" as his original source; the passage concerning the head reliquary has not been found, but there is no reason to doubt that it did exist. See Olsson 1944, 235–238; see also Källström 2011, 118.

[948] "*quod numquam sanctius caput alicuius viuentis intraret ecclesiam Lincopensem quam ipsius venerabilis patris Nicolai*", Lundén 1963, 146-147.

[949] Källström 1939, 301.

there.[950] The story follows the general lines of the genre of *inventio reliquiarum*, as Tryggve Lundén has observed.[951] In some cases, the connection between the story and actual physical artefacts seems more convincing than in others. The trope of shining heads was already discussed in the context of the legends of St Lucius and St Sunniva; at least in the case of St Lucius, it was indeed accompanied by a head reliquary of glossy metal. Thus Växjö could have been home to three head reliquaries or just one representing all the three holy heads.

The treasury of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen included two silver heads, only known about because of a fiscal document; whether or not they were reliquaries, and of which saints is no longer known, but the objects are mentioned in a document stating that Bishop Joachim Rønnow "borrowed" them to use the silver to pay his debt to the king in 1529.[952] Confronting this information with the cathedral's late medieval (undated) list of reliquaries, which does not include any head reliquaries, two explanations are possible: either these reliquaries were purchased only few years before falling out of use, or they were among the items in the reliquary list but not specified as heads. The list is quite specific on the material, shape and attribution of most items, however; there are not many likely hidden heads. Some "images" (*billede*) could have possibly been heads or busts, but it does not seem likely. As mentioned earlier, a common term for head reliquaries was not "image", but "head" (*hoved*).

In attempting to picture the lost silver head reliquaries, it may help to understand the effect they had on their viewers. These glossy, light-reflecting busts, specially the life-sized ones, must have been somewhat intimidating, as stated above, but Cynthia Hahn has brought up other aspects of those holy heads. The purpose of their shining perfection was also to inspire admiration, veneration, meditation and spiritual imitation: the virtuousness of saints was considered to be reflected in their faces and postures.[953]

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[950] Lundén 1983, 177–180; 202–213.
[951] Lundén 1983, 214–217.
[952] DK: København, 38; Rørdam, Kirke og klostre, 31.
[953] Hahn 2010b, 163–172.

### 8.2 Johannesschüssel – Between Relics and Reliquaries

Worth mentioning here is another type of head-shaped cult object that seems to fall between categories: they are shaped to represent a head relic – the severed head of St John the Baptist on a charger – and are often, but not always, primary or secondary reliquaries. Although shaped like heads, they are not exactly head reliquaries. These sculptures representing the severed head of John the Baptist on a plate are often called *Johannesschüssel*. Unlike the head-shaped reliquaries representing the heavenly, resurrected and thus living heads of saints, these objects are designed to simulate the relic itself, a dead, severed head lying on a charger. They are treated like reliquaries and carried in processions even when they do not include relics.[954]

Several wooden heads of St John are preserved in the Nordic countries. These Nordic heads of St John have not been associated with reliquaries in known written sources, but at least one of them seems to have an ostensible relic dimension. In Ørslev, Denmark, a wooden fifteenth-century head of John the Baptist on a wooden charger is surrounded, or framed, on the charger by three long human *tibia*. In a tradition that continued after the Reformation, it used to be carried in procession from the church to the local fountain of St John.[955] As the rule of *extra capsam non ostendetur* has been mostly followed, bare relic bones are still an unusual sight. Although they are usually protected by at least a cloth or window, there are exceptions: bare skulls on top of a footed base existed at least in the late-medieval Wittenberg relic collection.[956]

The head of St John from Bollnäs Church in Sweden (see image 37) is an unusual interpretation of the theme. According to Lennart Karlsson, the sculptor Haaken Gulleson was not familiar with the iconographical theme when he received the sculpting commission. The result is not the dead saint's head on a charger, but a healthy-looking bust on a plate-shaped base.[957] Indeed, as mentioned above, "heads" in medieval inventories were more often shaped as busts

[954] Vanhauwert & Geml 2016, 104–120. See also Baert 2015, 75–88.
[955] Grinder-Hansen 2002, 111.
[956] Cárdenas 2013, 173.
[957] Karlsson 1996, 7–20. For another Nordic version, see Norberg 1953, 88.

(and functioned as reliquaries) than severed heads, and so a bust might well have been the sculptor's first impression of what was required of him. It has also been suggested that the head originally belonged to a larger sculpture and was hastily transformed into a *Johannesschüssel* after Gulleson's time.[958] The inner structure of the bust has not been studied, but there are no exterior indications of it having a reliquary function.[959]

Internationally, the presence of relics in the *Johannesschüssel* sculptures varies from exposed bones to visible relic niches in the forehead and to hidden niches in the back of the head. In an article addressing the material aspects of the *Johannesschüssel*, art historians Soetkin Vanhauwaert and Georg Geml discuss the reliquary character of the items. They look for a way to distinguish reliquary from cult image, characterising *Johannesschüssel* as "a hybrid object, hesitating between two options – reliquary and sculpture." Vanhauwaert and Geml approach the question by asking whether precious metals or a visible relic niche suffice to define an object as a reliquary, while a wooden *Johannesschüssel* with a discreetly hidden relic can be defined as a devotional image. As they correctly point out, much of the existing research literature on reliquaries is focused on precious metal items, to the extent that gold and silver may seem like the only acceptable material for reliquaries to be made of. Several medieval texts concerning reliquaries, such as the writings of Guibert of Nogent and Thiofrid of Echternach, underline the importance of precious materials as well.[960] However, wooden primary reliquaries, explicitly and intentionally made for relics, indisputably exist in the Nordic area as they do in Central and Southern Europe. One of them will be discussed in the following pages.

### 8.3 The Sigtuna Bust – Local Heroine and Virgin of Cologne?

As has become apparent, dozens of reliquary heads – most of them probably shaped as busts – were acquired for Nordic churches between the 13th and 15th centuries, often from Central Europe. During

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[958] Film 1969, 217–218.

[959] Lars Nylander, antikvarie, Hälsinglands museum, reply to the author per e-mail 10.11.2016.

[960] Vanhauwert & Geml 2016, 118–120.

the Reformation and the following centuries, all but one of them were lost. The only remaining medieval reliquary bust (see image 38a) has survived in the thirteenth-century Dominican abbey church of St Mary in the small Swedish town of Sigtuna. This crowned, wooden bust of a female saint is probably a fifteenth-century piece of local craftsmanship.[961] Her hollow head has housed relics, which no longer exist.

Now charged with the responsibility of alone representing its genre, the bust suffers from almost total anonymity: its identity, maker or commissioner are not known. Only the two last centuries of its existence have been documented, illustrating recent shifts in the busts's location, physical condition and perceived identity. The bust has been briefly discussed in art historical treatises about St Mary's Church and in the context of an exhibition of Swedish relics and reliquaries in Stockholm in 1951; and the first article entirely dedicated to it was written by myself in 2017.[962]

The saint depicted has been variously identified as either St Ursula, St Catherine of Alexandria, the Virgin Mary, and Mary Magdalene – all of them associated with indulgences granted in the church. The local tradition, perhaps unaware of her sainthood, has dubbed her the Maiden of Venngarn, associating her to an ancient story related to a nearby manor. In this chapter, I discuss these five suggestions and argue that St Ursula is the most plausible candidate in the light of Nordic medieval documents.

**Late-Medieval Swedish Style?**

The reliquary character of the bust is not visible at first sight; the open space for relics is inside the head, and hidden behind the crown (see image 38b). The height of the Sigtuna bust is 43.5 cm, which corresponds to the average size of similar busts elsewhere. It is made of one piece of hardwood except for a low, round-profiled oak base

[961] Holmqvist 1947, 28; Strömsten & Svanberg 1976, 24–25; Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 24.

[962] Lahti 2017, 188–203. This chapter is largely based on the article. According to a footnote by Norberg (Norberg 1942, 76, note 24), af Ugglas was preparing a thorough article on the Sigtuna reliquary bust in 1942. It seems, however, that he did not have time to finish it before his death in 1946. It was also not included in his posthumously published articles: see af Ugglas 1951.

plate, that follows the outline of the bust, and the lobes of the crown, that are also oak and attached with wooden nails. The middle of the saint's back, from the lower edge of the crown until the base – that would have been covered by her long hair – is blank, without carved or painted details.

The saint is a slim half-figure with round, narrow shoulders and an elongated face. Other body-shapes, like arms or breasts, are not visible. Her position is centred and upright, without any Gothic "swing" or bend of the head. The gilt crown and dress have only a few details – the sculptor has concentrated mostly on the face. She has a contemplative smile, thin, light-brown eyebrows, and her eyes are half-open. Her eyelids are sculpted with narrow horizontal folds. The crown is high, widening upwards (similar to other crowns in the sculptures and paintings of the church – except that the others have more elaborate peaks), and it has no surface pattern. The spikes of the crown have bilobed peaks alternating with simple ones, but most of them have been damaged.

The upper edge of the crown is red, and there is a red line between the saint's hair and the lower edge of the crown. The saint's dark brown hair (with shades of copper) is long and straight, only curved over the ears, then following the line of the neck and shoulders, so that it covers the shoulders and sides until the base of the sculpture. On both sides, the hair is divided in the middle, revealing a narrow strip of her arm between the locks of hair. The outlines of the eyes are drawn in dark brown, and the blue iris is outlined with black. Her lips are red; the cheeks have a red blush; and the tip and sides of her nose, her chin and her neck up to just below her chin are tinted slightly red – which makes her otherwise pale-white face seem more alive. Her dress is painted gold just like the crown, and protruding from its thick, metallic light-green v-neck collar, is the tight red collar of an inner dress. On both the dress and crown, the paint is underlaid with linen. The polychromy of the bust – particularly in the facial details – has notable similarities with figures in altarpieces dating from the fourteenth-century in the same church, particularly the ones on the altar of St Mary, although their sculptural shape and style is not

entirely the same.[963] Some of the gilding and the original paint has worn off, and on the face, the damaged areas have been painted over with a thin oil paint, imitating the original colours but leaving the contours of the damage visible. Judging from archival images, this thin coat of colour was applied to the face in conservation efforts made between the years 1939 and 1951. On the crown, dress and base, bare wood from where paint has been lost is still visible. The base has small fragments of red and green paint, but most of its remaining paint is white and there are no indications of any pattern or text.

The top of the head, which also served as a lid to the relic space, is missing. It seems to have had some kind of a lock. Only a simple loop of metal wire remains attached to the inside of the back of the crown just below the peaked edge. The lid was probably made of the same wood as the rest of the bust and carved and painted to look like the hair on top of the saint's head or a top part of the crown – considering the high placement of the metal loop in the crown. Reliquary busts with such arrangements are still preserved at least in St Ursula's Church in Cologne. The inside is faintly red and has the remains of a linen lining. The space is not large enough for a whole cranium, but could have housed a cranial fragment. The reliquary could represent a saint even with just a tiny fragment of her relics, or even a collection of other saints' relics (as we have already seen).[964] It is not known when the bust lost its relics and the lid, but it was most likely during or after the Reformation.

The relic from this bust reliquary might still exist within the walls of St Mary's Church. During renovation of the church in 1966–1971, a niche was found in the eastern wall of the northern side aisle, inconspicuous under the painted wall surface. It contained two large fragments from the top and back parts of a skull, which were left in the resealed niche when the renovation was finished. According to a written report of the renovation, the plaster covering the wall in front of the niche was 'old' and possibly medieval.[965] Relics were inserted in church walls during the Middle Ages, for veneration, but also during

[963] Holmqvist 1947, 20–24; Norberg 1944, 21–51. See also Lahti 2017, 188–203.
[964] Hahn 2012, 117–133.
[965] Conservator Lars Göthberg, quoted in the renovation report by Else Norberg, Stockholm, Stockholms stadsarkiv, 1557 O1a vol. 17.

or after the Reformation, to save them from destruction.[966] In this case, the latter purpose seems likely.

As for the age and origin of the reliquary bust, the few published notions roughly agree on it being fifteenth-century Sweden – the features of the Sigtuna bust have no immediate similarity with other known European reliquary busts. The artist is unknown, and no works by the same hand have been recognised, but stylistically it correlates with Swedish sculpture from the period. Rune Norberg saw the touch of a local artist from the Uppland area in the bust's "stiffness and fresh vigour" and "clumsiness". Based on stylistic details – the wide crown, the hair and the slim shoulders – he dates it to circa 1460 or later, considering the slower stylistic alterations in local "peasant art".[967] One may not entirely agree with his description or reasoning, but the attribution to a local artist is plausible. Similar types of faces with elongated features can be seen in the production of the Swedish fifteenth-century sculptor and painter, Haaken Gulleson, and his school or workshop. The rosy cheeks, chins and noses are also typical of the Gulleson polychromy. One bust attributed to Gulleson is known, albeit not a reliquary; it is the above-mentioned unusual version of the *Johannesschüssel* (see image 37).[968] The characteristic fold in the middle of the Sigtuna bust's upper eyelid does not appear in the sculptures attributed to Gulleson, but it may nevertheless originate from a workshop under his stylistic influence.

**Who's That Girl?**

Although there is no remaining indication of the saint's identity, she cannot have been anonymous in the Middle Ages. Like other devotional images, reliquary busts were not simply revered as generic representations of saints, but containers of the real presence of a specific saint with whom the visitors could interact. Even if there

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[966] Medieval relic niches in church walls could be indicated by *sigillum*-type plates; see e.g. Källström 2011, 78–80; 114–115. Relics were found hidden, apparently to save them from the reformers, in a wall niche also in Turku Cathedral; see Rinne 1932, 273–281.

[967] Norberg 1942, 71–72; see also Norberg 1944.

[968] Karlsson 2005, 73–75. I am grateful to my supervisor Elina Räsänen for redirecting my attention to Gulleson, who I had already previously discarded as one possible author for the Sigtuna bust.

might never have been a visible, recognisable attribute or name on the bust, the congregation would have known their local saints, relics, treasures, and heavenly patrons. The relic inside the bust would have had an *authentica* officially validating its identity. During the centuries following the Reformation, the relic was hidden or destroyed, and the bust and its identity were forgotten about.

Archival sources do not seem to help in identifying the saint, either. There are no documents referring to relics or reliquaries of female saints in Sigtuna. No medieval list of relics or treasures of the church is preserved,[969] but the church is known to have had at least a relic of the True Cross, in a cross-shaped reliquary, at the altar dedicated to the Holy Cross and the apostles Peter and Paul, plus a relic of St Eric.[970] The other altars, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, St Nicholas and St Catherine of Alexandria,[971] could be related to the acquisition of a reliquary, as we have seen in the context of the reliquary sculptures above, but of those three, the bust could probably only represent St Catherine. Both Virgin Mary and St Catherine are, in fact, among the identities suggested by twentieth-century historians.

The bust's only attribute, the crown, applies to about half the known medieval female saints, which means the number of possible candidates remains large. The church's patroness Virgin Mary, of course, is one of them, and she could be a good candidate, considering her liturgical and visual prevalence there.[972] However, no reliquary bust of the Virgin Mary is known in Europe, although several full-

[969] An inventory of 1580 and the confiscation notes of 1523 are preserved, but they only include unspecified amounts of silver and utensils for the eucharist. See Källström 1939, 240. Among those items were possibly a silver pyx, for which a testament donation was issued in 1326 (SDHK 3387), and three chalices documented in 1334 (SDHK 4069), in 1337 (SDHK 4375), and in 1345 (SDHK 5135).

[970] SDHK 1493; SDHK 2021; Norberg 1942, 62.

[971] SDHK 1470 (St Nicholas); Norberg 1942, 62–63. Neither the altar, nor the reliquary would necessarily have needed the specific saint's relics in order to represent him or her; see e.g. Jexlev 1976, 39; Herrmann-Mascard 1975, 125.

[972] Apart from altarpieces and paintings, the Virgin Mary was also represented in a sculpture, which was an object of veneration in the church. In 1487, it received a crown as a donation: *Nu ær hær eth lithet clenodium epther som ær en crona som jak nu kærligha giffwer til jomfru maria belate i Sictuna closter*. SDHK 31924; quoted in Schmid 1947, 75.

body sculptures of her include small, hidden or visible cavities for relics.[973] Relics of her head or body were not available due to her assumption, but there were plenty of secondary relics attributed to her. In Sigtuna, Virgin Mary was the first identification the bust was given in the earliest existing written mentions. In the inventory of 1883, the bust is identified and named for the first time: it is listed as the "wooden head of Mary with a crown" (*Marie hufvud af trä med krona*).[974] The subsequent inventories repeat the name over the next few decades.

St Catherine of Alexandria is usually portrayed crowned, too; her hypothetical association to the bust was loosely based on images of crowned female saints in a wall painting and on altarpieces in the same church, that have also been recognised as possibly representing her.[975] She was a protectress of the Dominican order that enjoyed popularity in medieval Sweden as one of the Holy Helpers. Despite the uncertain identification of the images, it can be confirmed that she was given a certain importance in the church because of the altar dedicated to her; she is also depicted in a sixteenth-century chalice, and already by 1281 she was among the saints on whose days indulgence was granted to visitors.[976]

Since the late 1990s, the bust has been introduced to the visitors in the church as "probably representing Mary Magdalene".[977] She is a protectress of the Dominican order and one of the indulgence-related saints of the abbey's church, but she is not present in the remaining medieval imagery in the church.[978] However, the main argument against the bust representing Mary Magdalene is that a crown is not among one of her typical attributes. Of the three medieval reliquary busts remaining of her in Europe, none are crowned.

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[973] Forsyth 1972, 31–38; 67–86, and *passim*; Liepe 2014, 41; Nikula 1973, 44–45.

[974] Stockholms stadsarkiv, 1557 N III vol 1.

[975] Holmqvist 1947, 28; 33; Strömsten – Svanberg, 1976, 24–25.

[976] Norberg 1942, 71; a letter from Archbishop Jakob Israelsson of Uppsala, 1281, SDHK 1192.

[977] Storm & Weman (s.d.), 9–10.

[978] One of the crowned female saints in a medieval altarpiece has also – without further iconographic motivation – been interpreted as Mary Magdalene. Holmqvist 1947, 25; Storm & Weman (s.d.), 11.

Another candidate for the bust's identity is St Ursula or one of the thousands of her virginal companions.[979] The 11,000 Virgins were also among the indulgence saints of the church, but they are not represented in any of the preserved images there. However, St Ursula with a crown is portrayed holding an arrow and surrounded by her companions (who are not crowned) in the paintings of several other churches in Uppland – near Sigtuna. Statistical probability would support the notion that the bust represents one of the 11,000 Virgins, as they constitute the majority of all the wooden reliquary busts that remain in Europe. But the majority of those busts originate from workshops in Cologne, and the style of the Sigtuna bust, as mentioned earlier, indicates that it is not made in Cologne. Nevertheless, the supposedly Swedish sculptor must have found similar models from Cologne in other Swedish churches. Apart from the sculptural style, there are two main differences between this bust and those from the famous Cologne workshops. Although they have one relic space in common (in the head), the Sigtuna bust lacks a cavity in the chest, which the Cologne models had as well – accessed via a trefoil of quatrefoil window. Iconographically, the only Ursula-related attribute in the Sigtuna bust is the crown. Most of the Cologne busts represent her companions, and are seldom crowned. However, in medieval Sweden and Denmark, as stated above, at least two to four of the busts of St Ursula's companions were crowned.

Could a local female saint have been overlooked by the researchers as a possible candidate for the role? Taking into account the medieval documents from Sweden, it seems that the skull relics of at least St Birgitta and Katarina of Vadstena had their own reliquaries, although their shape is not known.[980] However, none of these either would have been crowned.

In the early 20th century, the local oral tradition gave the bust another name – "the maiden from Venngarn".[981] Queen Disa of Venngarn (a royal manor near Sigtuna) was not a saint, but she became a heroine in local folklore, according to a story published in

[979] Strömsten & Svanberg 1976, 14; 24.
[980] DV 271–273; Fritz & Elfving 2004, 45–55; Lindblom 1963, 19–20; SRS III:2, 271; 273.
[981] Norberg 1942, 70–71; Strömsten & Svanberg 1976, 24–25.

1555 by Olaus Magnus, which portrayed her as a virtuous, wise, even saintly figure who risked her own life to save people being sacrificed (to pagan gods) or starved to death.[982] This local name reflects a certain fondness of the bust during the time when both its function and name were still unknown. In the 1940s, this attribution inspired a local artisan, Håkan Undén, who made small-scale ceramic copies of the reliquary and, as a tribute to the vernacular name of the reliquary, he called them "*Jungfrun från Venngarn*".[983] With the language of wood rendered into clay and the scale changed from almost life-size to miniature, the original can still be recognised in the new busts.[984]

**Hidden, on Display**

Although practically nothing is known about the bust's earlier life, it is assumed to have been in St Mary's Church already in the Middle Ages – unless it was brought from one of the other Sigtuna churches in the 16th century. As a result of the Reformation, the Dominican Abbey of St Mary was abolished,[985] and yet the church remained. The next decision, taken in the Örebro Council of 1529, was to close down all the churches in Sigtuna except for the former abbey church of St Mary's, which now became the town's only parish church. The ruins of three churches – St Olov's, St Peter's, and St Lawrence's – still exist, but the details and fates of their interiors and sculptures have been forgotten.

The original location of the bust in the medieval church space is unknown,[986] but its shape could be interpreted as a clue. In reliquary busts, leaving the back unfinished or blank, as in Sigtuna, is less

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[982] Olaus Magnus, 121–123.

[983] A brief biography of Undén (1919–1993) can be found in Vingedal 1982, 187. Images of the small busts can be found in this ceramic-related web forum: http://precisensan.com/ antikforum/showthread.php?35794-Hj%E4lp-med-H%E5kan-Und%E9n-Sigtuna (cited 12.4.2016)

[984] Ceramic as a medium seems to take the figure away from the sphere of reliquaries, but in fact, the association is not so rare: an eighteenth-century reliquary bust of faience is preserved in Viseu, Portugal: see Gorjão & Cardoso 2012, 50–51.

[985] A further connection between the Dominican abbey and Venngarn was created in the 16th century, when stones from the demolished abbey were used to build the new manor at Venngarn. Holmqvist 1947, 37–39.

[986] Holmqvist 1947, 28; 33; Strömsten & Svanberg 1976, 24–25.

common than with other medieval wooden sculptures; reliquaries were, after all, often carried in processions, where they could be seen from all sides. The blank back implies that the bust might not have been used in processions, but had a permanent setting – like an altarpiece. This is Norberg's reasonable hypothesis, as the busts of the 11,000 virgins to be found in the altarpieces of Central Europe all have flat backs,[987] but those were arranged in altarpieces containing several busts, and one with only one bust would be unlikely. Instead of picturing an entire lost altarpiece and several lost reliquary busts, it might be easier to presume that a commissioner and sculptor envisioned another permanent spot for the bust – perhaps in the wall niche that is its current location. Art historian Erik Floderus, who believed it was a bust of St Catherine, concluded that it had once stood on the side altar dedicated to her.[988] This is a plausible theory, too, as many other busts throughout Europe either stood in an altarpiece, in a wall niche or on a shelf, and during festivities, it may also have been on top of an altar.[989]

Written sources do not even confirm the existence of the reliquary in Sigtuna before the beginning of the 19th century. In the inventory lists of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there is no mention of sculptures; the lists only contain metal objects, textiles, and books. Yet there might also have been room for cult images of the past – no longer objects of cult, but also not considered too disturbing signs of the "papal times". It seems that at least some of the medieval sculptures were kept in the church, hidden in plain sight as it were – a copy of an eighteenth-century report on the Sigtuna churches (circa 1756) mentions "some old wooden images placed hither and thither around the church, which are not considered worth the effort of counting".[990] The reliquary bust may well have been one of these. The

[987] Montgomery 2010, 78.

[988] Floderus 1941, 145: "En bröstbild av trä, sannolikt en relikgömma, vilken i våra dagar går under benämningen 'jungfrun från Venngarn', föreställer måhända S:ta Katarina och har väl i så fall haft sin plats på hennes altare."

[989] Snoek 1995, 209–213; van Tongeren 2009, 270–271.

[990] "Några stycken gamla träbilder stå här och där kring kyrkan, som man ej håller mödan wärt att upräkna, och annat dylikt", Stockholm, Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet (ATA), Alexander Setons papper. F1 Korrespondens och koncept, vol. 1. Quoted also in Norberg 1942, 63.

first specific mention of the reliquary in the inventories of St Mary's church is from 1829: "On the innermost column on the northern side is a human head with a crown".[991] Later in the same century, as mentioned earlier, the bust was identified as the Virgin Mary's head, but the reliquary function was not recognised. High up on the column, the bust was indeed nearly hidden: it could only be seen from a distance, and the opening on the top of the head was completely invisible.

The renovations of the church in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries may have forced sculptures to be moved from one place to another within the church.[992] From 1829 onwards, however, it seems to have stayed on the same column until a renovation in 1904–05, after which the bust was again placed on top of the north-easternmost column in the nave, near the altar – apparently the same place it had been in before.[993] In 1937, art historians from the Swedish National Heritage Board (NHB) took interest in the reliquary among other medieval artefacts in the church. The reliquary was temporarily taken to Stockholm for investigation and conservation. At this point, the researchers consulted the German historian of reliquaries, Joseph Braun. In his reply, Braun simply concluded that this was the proof of the existence of head reliquaries in Sweden and classified it among his aforementioned "speaking" (*Redende*) category of reliquaries.[994] Upon its return to Sigtuna in 1938, the researchers of NHB recommended that it should be given a lower position so it could be seen more easily. In later photographs from the church, the bust can be seen on a lower column in the north side aisle (see image 38c). The bust continued to fascinate the researchers in Stockholm though, and it was borrowed again in 1951, when an exhibition on medieval relics and reliquaries in Sweden was arranged at the Museum of Swedish

[991] "På innersta Pelaren å norra sidan står en menniskobild med krona på Huvudet", Stockholm, Stockholms stadsarkiv: 1557 O1a vol 1.

[992] Holmqvist 1947, 39–42. For more on the renovations, although not on the reliquary, see also Weman 2011, 35–48.

[993] Conservation report by Else Nordahl 1979. Stockholm, ATA, F1 Topografiska dossierer: Up Sigtuna Mariakyrka.

[994] Stockholm, ATA, F1 Topografiska dossierer, UP Sigtuna Mariakyrkan 1954; Hahn 1997a, 22–27.

History.[995] Finally, after the renovation of the church in 1966–1971, the bust was returned and placed in the wall niche where it currently resides behind the main altar. There are two equal, ornament-painted niches high on the east wall of the choir, symmetrically placed on each side of the altar. Currently the northern niche contains a wooden crucifix and the southern the reliquary bust. In previous photographs, the niches are empty – their medieval use is not known – but they may have been sacramental niches. Now the bust is visible, but safely out of reach.

In the previous pages, the bust's itinerary through different locations and identities in the two latest centuries of its existence was traced. A technical analysis of the materials and a search for other works by the same sculptor could be the next steps towards better understanding its origins.

### 8.4 Silk Skulls – Sculptures of Cloth and Bone

Silk skulls or "holy heads" as they are also known (*Heilige Haupten* in German) are technically, materially, and visually different from other head reliquaries as they are the only body-part reliquary made of cloth. Unlike head reliquaries made of silver or wood, they are not shaped to imitate a head – instead, the silk surface simply follows and reveals the shape of the relic itself. Instead of facial details, silk heads are usually decorated with ornamental patterns. As a result, they are also among the types of objects where relic and reliquary are so inextricably united that it is impossible to perceive them as separate items. They are both images of the head, and yet *not*, as they are also the head itself. As a consequence, they are not always recognised as reliquaries, but as relics wrapped in cloth.

Cloth is a rather uncommon material for reliquaries, perhaps because it is more prone to decaying over time, and cannot be sculpted as such – most textile reliquaries are simple purses or cloth-covered boxes. They are also less studied in art history than their counterparts in other more typically solid materials. Braun, for instance, only recognises two German textile head reliquaries, or "free interpretations of head reliquaries" as he calls them.[996] In his opinion,

[995] Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 24.
[996] Braun 1940, 416.

these two seemed to be curious and unusual objects, but they were no rarity, as we can see in the extant reliquary collections of, for example, St Ursula in Cologne and São Roque in Lisbon.[997] Most of the existing silk head reliquaries clearly belong to the same sixteenth-century tradition, maybe even originating from the same workshop or a network of interrelated workshops. The basis of the structure is a skull, around which a kind of hood has been sewn that follows its form and leaves some of the bone surface at the forehead visible. The cloth is silk or velvet, usually purple, and embroidered and decorated with metal paillettes, pearls, or gems.[998] Most are embroidered with plant-like ornamental motifs.

Most of these decorated silk skulls are identified with the cult of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins. As Scott Montgomery has observed, these "holy heads" were usually displayed together with typical bust reliquaries of the 11,000 Virgins. In his view, the busts provided a code for interpreting the holy heads – though the shape of the skulls was distinguishable behind the embroidered silk, the viewer was to understand them as belonging to the choir of harmonious, smiling busts.[999] They are thus found on decorative shelves architecturally structured for their display: large structures covering the walls of a chapel, as in the *Goldene Kammer* of St Ursula's in Cologne; or latticed niches in altarpieces, as in the famous winged altarpiece at Marienstatt. In the latter, the inside of the altarpiece consists of three levels: full-body sculptures of saints are displayed in the uppermost part, reliquary busts in the middle, and a row of silk skulls below.

In the North, there are no indications of such arrangements of display, nor of the existence of several silk heads. Unlike most other reliquary types, the silk heads seem to have left no trace in the Nordic medieval documents, so it is difficult to estimate how many there may have been. Vadstena, with its concentration of embroidery skills, is certainly a contender for having produced silk skulls meant for display, but no testimonies of this have been found. Instead, two skull-based silk reliquaries have been found in Turku Cathedral, and

[997] Legner 1995, 170–171; 194–197; 210–213; de Freitas Carvalho 2001, 95–155.
[998] For similar reliquaries with an earlier dating, see also Schnütgen 1899, 65–67.
[999] Montgomery 2010, 79.

they will be discussed at the end of this chapter. They both differ from other European silk skulls by having a constructed shape; and one of them differs further insofar as the same object depicts a head via its shape, whilst at the same time depicting the loss of that head via the embroidery it is wrapped in. Before we turn to this in more detail, however, I shall examine the second, simpler silk skull, and a third relic-related silk item found in the same cathedral.

**Silk Hoods for Hidden Skulls**

Skulls wrapped in silk can also be found inside wooden or metallic reliquaries. Unlike those displayed on altarpieces and pillows, they are not adorned with pearls or ornaments.[1000] Although the shape is otherwise similar, they have a more practical function – to protect the relic, rather than display or represent it. Embroidery and a lack thereof could thus be one way of distinguishing between silk skulls for display and those for reliquaries. Though they have much in common, they belong to two different spheres – the visible and the hidden. All relics, not only skulls, are usually wrapped or sewn in a cloth – often silk from Southern Europe or imported from Asia – which was one of the most prestigious materials in medieval Europe, nearly equal to relics and illustrated manuscripts.[1001] With them, oriental animal and plant motifs spread into Christian churches – even Bernard de Clairvaux, who despised such 'monster' images in churches, ended up with his bones being wrapped in griffin-patterned cloth.[1002] Nevertheless, the visibility of those patterns was not a priority, although the most precious textiles were naturally preferable to accompany and protect the holy relics. In the meantime, reliquaries have also provided protection so that valuable fragments of these rare textiles have survived.[1003]

I find it likely that the practice of wrapping skulls in silk before placing them in their reliquaries eventually led to the development of

[1000] For instance St Barbara's reliquary bust in Braunschweig, Germany, contained a skull relic wrapped in linen and silk, with the name of the saint attached on it; see Boockmann 1997, 117.

[1001] Geary 1988, 174.

[1002] Laporte 1988, 133–150.

[1003] For more on the practices and reasons for wrapping relics, see Bagnoli 2014, 100–109.

independent silk skull reliquaries. This could have happened when the metal reliquary was lost and could not be immediately substituted, so the silk covering was improved instead, thus making it look more like a reliquary of its own right. This would also have avoided breaching the prohibition of displaying relics outside reliquaries. Nevertheless, rich decorations *per se* are not always an indication that they were on permanent display; medieval art is full of various items (like inner panels of altarpieces) that were visually impressive but meant to be seen only on special occasions.

One example of silk cloth was found together with a skull in Turku Cathedral. It was found without any wooden or metal reliquary, but it seems clearly meant to be used inside a reliquary rather than for display. It also deserves attention for being the only remaining example of its kind in the Nordic countries. With all likelihood, most of the skulls kept inside the metal or wood reliquaries discussed above were wrapped or sewn into a protective cloth of silk, as they often were in the rest of Europe. The red cloth is sewn to fit the shape of a skull, but has no signs of iconographical or other decorations. An example of a similar type of cloth-covered skull is described in a document from fourteenth-century France:

> a certain large beautiful silver-gilt head, shaped like that of a woman, within which were the bones of a single head, rolled-up and stitched in a certain white linen cloth, red muslin having been placed over it, and there was sewn in there a certain document on which was written *capud lviii*, and the said bones were considered as similar to the bones of the head of a small woman, and it was said by some that it was the head of one of the eleven thousand virgins.[1004]

The cloth is open at the forehead, like silk skull reliquaries and the embroidered silk skull from Turku (discussed below). The survival of two similarly skull-shaped silk items in the same cathedral is noteworthy for several reasons, not least because textiles are among the most difficult materials to preserve over long periods of time. If they were not made at the same time, it is likely that one of them at

[1004] Barber 1993, 163.

least served as a model for the other. Both of them consist of three layers – in the case of the simpler one, white linen over the bone, green silk over that, and purple silk on top. The only decoration is a ribbon with gold thread sewn on the upper layer of silk around the opening at the forehead. All the layers were carefully sewn to fit the form of the skull, but the green silk and linen layers were found in such a disintegrated state that it was impossible to find out if they also had an opening like the red silk.[1005]

The cloth was found in 1924 in a sealed wall niche in the sacristy together with the skull and arm bones attributed to St Henrik. It seems to have once covered the skull but fallen away, either through becoming fragile with time, or being intentionally ripped off at some point already before it was placed in the niche. The similarity in the exterior shape of the silk cloth and the skull-shaped embroidered reliquary strengthened the archaeologist Juhani Rinne's belief that the two items belonged together – the embroidered one housing the lower jaw of St Henrik, and the other the rest of the skull. Rinne's theory was that one of them had its place on the main altar, and the other on the altar of St Henrik.[1006] The silk cloth could just as easily been made in Turku, if made for a local relic, as it could have been brought from abroad. The skull and the lower jaw have been tested to see if they fit together, but according to the tests commissioned by C.A. Nordman, they are not from the same head.[1007] With current dating methods, the age of the bones and textiles can be re-estimated. One unanswered question is also whose relics and reliquaries they were *believed* to be, and to whom they were attributed in the cathedral. Considering the above-mentioned references to a silver reliquary for the head of St Henrik, he is a likely candidate.

Another piece of silk protection for a skull relic – the cap for the relic of St Lucius, probably kept inside a bust reliquary in Roskilde Cathedral – is preserved in the Danish National Museum. It was already briefly discussed above with regards to the lost bust reliquary so it will not be analysed any further here. Nevertheless, though it is

[1005] Rinne 1932, 273–281.
[1006] Rinne 1932, 273–281; 335–354.
[1007] Rinne 1932, 345; Nordman 1954, 310.

not directly related to the genre of "silk heads" treated below, it is also an example of the same practice of wrapping relics in silk.

## 8.5 A Crowned Silk Head

A red silk reliquary resembling a cap, but with a closed bottom (see image 39), was found alongside other textile-wrapped relics and several fragments of bones in the wooden casket generally known as "the coffin of Bishop Hemming" in Turku Cathedral. Since then, it has been mistakenly assumed to be a relic of St Birgitta. In this section, I will discuss its structure and the lack of substantiation for the earlier identification; finally, I will suggest two alternative interpretations.

The object, like the embroidered skull reliquary to be discussed after it, is a unique construction, seemingly built to combine reliquary and relic into a nearly symmetrical shape. When Juhani Rinne investigated it in the 1920s, he observed that it consisted of three layers: several relics wrapped in coarse linen fabric and sewn together, enclosed in two layers of silk. In textile conservator Mira Karttila's investigation of the object in 2012, the construction was found to be more complicated: there were six layers to the relic packages – one of linen, two of nettle, and three of silk.[1008] Under the arching dome shaped by the bone packages, the reliquary is closed with a flat, nearly round bottom surface of silk. The red silk reliquary, which has now faded to a light shade of pink, is wrapped in white, silver-striped cotton ribbons which cross over the "dome" and one green-blue silk-linen ribbon around the edge, complemented by four short strips of metal-coated leather. The leather strips have preserved fragments of decoration: small red coral beads, of which only two remain, and an embroidery of looped gilt-silver thread. The blue-green ribbon is very worn and has been patched with thread and a lighter-coloured silk. Also nearly a quarter of the white ribbon is missing. The object as a whole has been dated to the late 13th or early 14th centuries.[1009]

In its current shape, and seen from the side, when the flat bottom side is invisible, the reliquary resembles an ecclesiastic *zucchetto* cap

[1008] Karttila 2014, 13–14.

[1009] Conservator's condition report, NBA / Tomanterä 2007; Karttila 2012, 4–5; 15; 26–33; Karttila 2014, 14; 17–18.

worn by Catholic clergy. However, the current shape was created by conservators with the help of additional materials. When the reliquary was found by Rinne in the 1920s, it was practically shapeless, and a new shape was given to it according to Rinne's views in the Finnish National Museum.[1010] Karttila has expressed doubts on the shape; in her examination of the object, the half-globe shape appeared to be a later interpretation. Karttila also observed similarities between the shapes of the textile fragments of the two textile reliquaries of Turku, which leaves open the possibility that this reliquary, too, might have had more of a skull-like shape. However, the resolution after Karttila's investigation was to rebuild the structure in the same half-globe shape it had maintained after the previous, undocumented conservation.[1011]

Although many of the small silk-wrapped relics found in the same casket have *authentica* attached to them, the "half-globe" has no textual or iconographical details that could reveal its cultic identity. The parchment strips at the lower edge could have been suitable places for a written identification, but it seems they were so thoroughly decorated that there was no room for text.

**From Saint Birgitta to Saint Ursula**

The cross of ribbons over the 'head' have reminded some researchers of the so-called crown of the Birgittine nuns, and hence, since the reliquary was rediscovered in the 1920s, it has been called St Birgitta's skull-bone reliquary in Finland.[1012] This stems from Rinne's hasty assumption that the reliquary was made in Vadstena and donated to Turku in order to be placed in the sarcophagus of Bishop Hemming – Birgitta's "life-long friend" – in his translation ceremony in Turku Cathedral in the early 16th century.[1013] However, already by 1954, Swedish historians Bygdén, Gejvall, and Hjortsjö were arguing that the connection between the reliquary and St Birgitta was unlikely, even if Turku Cathedral probably did have some relics of St Birgitta.[1014]

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[1010] Rinne 1932, 357.
[1011] Karttila 2012, 49–52; Karttila 2014, 14; 20.
[1012] See e.g. Hiekkanen 2003, 135; Karttila 2014, 10–25.
[1013] Rinne 1932, 355–364.
[1014] Bygdén & Gejvall & Hjortsjö 1954, 40; 46–47.

The linen crown, to which Rinne alludes, was defined at the founding of the Birgittine order in the Revelations of St Birgitta and had very specific characteristics of its own. Worn over a black coif, the crown was composed of a white ribbon with five round, red dots at the intersections, which symbolised the five wounds of Christ. Similarly shaped crowns, but with different details, were worn by nuns in other medieval monastic orders, too, as Angela Kappeler points out. For these nuns, it was essentially a sign of virginity, and this was the prerequisite for wearing the crown for most orders. For the Birgittines, however, the crown was specifically a sign of dedication and spiritual marriage to Christ, and was also allowed for widows.[1015]

The colours and details in the Turku reliquary are indeed quite different from the Birgittine crown, as Rinne himself admits.[1016] The crossed ribbons are the only possible basis for associating the crown with the reliquary, but the colours in the reliquary do not fit with Birgittine iconography. The rows of five red beads in the ends of each parchment strip could, in some way, stand for the five wounds of Christ, as art historian Riitta Pylkkänen suggested in the catalogue of the *Ars Sacra* exhibition in Turku in 1976.[1017] However, the five dots in the Birgittine crown should invariably be red and round, and this crown-like decoration with different colours and shapes cannot necessarily be taken as an allusion to it. Already in the early 20th century, the object was so worn that the number and design of its details could not have been relied on to correspond to the object in its original state, so it is more likely that it never represented a Birgittine crown.

Another Nordic embroidered reliquary for a head was recently attributed by Eva Lindqvist Sandgren to the Vadstena Birgittines, and it was discussed in the chapter on pyxes. The lid of this pyx is also embroidered with the same crown shape, which used to be covered in gilt silver paillettes, and the intersections originally had different decorations of unknown shape and colour.[1018] In other words, the

[1015] Kappeler 2013, 136–145.
[1016] Rinne 1932, 358.
[1017] Pylkkänen 1976, cat. nr. 33.
[1018] Lindqvist Sandgren 2018, 46–47.

intention here was not to directly mimic the Birgittine crown, either. However, Lindqvist Sandgren has other arguments for attributing the pyx to the Birgittines; the crown alone would not suffice, as it doesn't in the case of the Turku reliquary.

Moreover, crossed ribbons are no rarity on textile skull reliquaries: in a painting from around 1500, we see an altar in St Severin's Church in Cologne and a skull with a dark cap or hood, decorated with crossed ribbons on the altar that bears a greater resemblance to a Birgittine crown than the reliquary in Turku.[1019] Red textile skull reliquaries have also been decorated with crossed ribbons like this in Germany, too, in the cult of St Ursula, where the crowns are understood to refer to the virginity of saints. A golden crown of the same shape is also worn by the silver head reliquary of the bearded martyr, St Candide, in the Abbey of Saint-Maurice d'Agaune in Switzerland[1020] – so the shape is not exclusive to female virgins or nuns.

The countless wooden reliquary busts of St Ursula and her 11,000 companions provide a rich background material to the "crowned" silk reliquary in Turku. Some of the openable heads or windowed spaces in the bellies of the busts included a whole cranium, but it is also common to see smaller relics reminiscent of the cap-shaped reliquary in Turku.[1021] In her thesis, Karttila suggests that there might be a connection between the reliquary and the cult of St Ursula, which was also present in Turku.[1022] Considering the active relic trade in Cologne, it would not be surprising to find relics and reliquaries of that tradition in Turku. Crossed ribbons forming a crown would be a reference to the saint's virginity. I would agree that the cult of St Ursula in Cologne is a more likely origin for this object, as the dating of the Turku reliquary also seems to pre-date the Birgittine crown and the cult of St Birgitta. But I would like to add another possible layer of interpretation in the next section.

[1019] Legner 1989, 83; Legner 1995, tafel 1.
[1020] See e.g. Wittekind 2005, 123.
[1021] Urbanek 2010, 76–77.
[1022] Karttila 2012, 9–10; Karttila 2014, 22.

**The Red Cap of Bishop Henrik?**

An object reminiscent of the crowned silk skull reliquary features in the textual and visual tradition of Bishop Henrik, the local matryr and patron saint of Turku Cathedral. A red episcopal cap, or *birretum*, plays a part in his martyrium and is described in the folklore as well as in the official ecclesiastic legend and its illustrations. The cap is stolen from the bishop by his murderer, Lalli, who then puts it on his own head; but when Lalli tries to take it off, he ends up ripping off his own scalp together with it. The hymn of St Henrik's day presents the cap as an active, aggressive relic that punishes Lalli by biting him.[1023] The cap has been portrayed as a small, red silk cap similar to the clerical *zucchetto,* not as a three- or four-peaked biretta.

When studying the legend, the Finnish folklore researcher Martti Haavio concluded that the detail about the *birretum* had been included in order to provide a story that would vindicate the authenticity of an existing relic in Turku; without such a need, the cap scene would not be necessary in the legend.[1024] He was thinking of a specific relic: not the "Birgittine" one, but another red silk reliquary in the cathedral that had been identified by Juhani Rinne as being dedicated to St Henrik, although it was not shaped like a cap, but constructed to imitate an entire skull.[1025] This skull-shaped, embroidered reliquary is the focus of the "Double Image" section below.

Despite the difference in shape, Haavio did not doubt his identification of the skull-shaped reliquary with Bishop Henrik's *birretum*. The legend does not explain what happened to the *birretum* after the murderer ripped the stolen item off his own head; indeed, if we imagine the cap as a relic, it might have inspired ambiguous feelings if the relic was supposed to also include the murderer's scalp. Nevertheless, Haavio found further support for his interpretation in oral folklore from Köyliö – supposedly Lalli's home village, and the location for the bishop's martyrium. According to a local story, published by historian Jalmari Jaakkola, the first Christians in the area had held their meetings in an underground church in the cellar of

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[1023] *Birretum mordet impium occisorem pontificis, per anxium supplicium carne priuatur verticis.* Taitto 1998, 121.

[1024] Haavio 1948, 168–170.

[1025] Rinne 1932, 333–354.

Lalli's widow (who had eventually converted to Christianity after her husband's death); and it was there that they worshipped the red cap Lalli had stolen from St Henrik. Jaakkola had also suggested that the worshipped red cap might relate to the "artificial cult skull" reliquary in Turku Cathedral.[1026]

In a recent article, historian Tuomas Heikkilä also argues that, considering its prominence in a range of narratives, the *birretum* relic was probably an object of medieval veneration in Turku, whether or not it was "true or fake".[1027] Haavio's theory is fascinating and potentially convincing, but I find it difficult to associate the cap with the skull-shaped structure. I suggest instead that the present "Birgittine" cap-shaped reliquary might be the object behind the *birretum* theme. Red, round silk caps are not characteristic of the Birgittine order, but they do belong to the outfit of a bishop. Even if the origin of the red reliquary was in Cologne and St Ursula's community of 11,000 Virgins, it could still have undergone a shift of identity as a result of the powerful story of the bishop's cap in Turku – if that was necessary.

### 8.6 The Embroidered Reliquary in Turku – a Double Image

The last reliquary discussed in this thesis is one of the most unusual objects preserved from the Nordic Middle Ages: the embroidered, constructed skull-shaped reliquary (see image 40a-b) that is now in the museum of Turku Cathedral.[1028] The surface of the reliquary is red silk, and the structure under it consists of a mandible and several other bone fragments wrapped in separate linen packages and sewn together into a skull shape. The embroidery, on the side of the skull's 'face', represents a *martyrium* where a kneeling saint has been beheaded (see image 40b). Other details include a large, triangular, horizontal aperture above the embroidery, showing the hollow inside, and small green loops on either side. The saint in question has not been identified with any certainty due to a lack attributes in the image or any other sources explicitly related to it. However, in previous

[1026] Jaakkola 1936, 23.
[1027] Heikkilä 2016, 233.
[1028] Until 2007, it was preserved by the Finnish Heritage Agency (FHA) in Helsinki (archival nr 52090).

research, the most likely candidates were thought to be St Eric or St Henrik, who were both patron saints of the cathedral during the Catholic era. In this chapter, I discuss the object's structure and iconography and suggest a connection to the textile head reliquaries of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins of Cologne.

The essential characteristic of the reliquary, in my view, is that it can be seen as two different representations: a three-dimensional, sculptural image of a skull and a two-dimensional, embroidered image of a beheading.[1029] When Scott B. Montgomery talks about the "holy heads" of Cologne being "dressed in lavish cloth wraps, decorated with embroidered ornamentation", he unwittingly sums up what essentially distinguishes the Turku head from them.[1030] While the cloth might well be wrapped and sewn to follow the shape of a skull, the Turku skull itself is a construction consisting of several elements stitched together; and whereas the Cologne heads are ornamentally embroidered, the one in Turku is illustrated with the particular narrative image of a *martyrium*.

The foremost source for a study of the embroidered reliquary is the object itself. No contemporaneous written sources or images of it remain, and all the hitherto research results considering its age, identity, origin, meaning, use and contents are more or less uncertain. Many of these questions remain unanswered, but another look at them could bring us closer to understanding the object.

**Researchers and Arguments on Dating and Identification**

The embroidered reliquary has intermittently attracted the interest of archaeologists, historians, and art historians for the past hundred years. They have looked at practical matters, such as the materials and techniques used in its construction; and there have also been attempts to identify the saint depicted. Without becoming particularly famous in the process, it is one of the most studied Nordic reliquaries. Two important treatises on it were written by Juhani Rinne in his book *Pyhä Henrik. Piispa ja marttyyri* (1932) and by C.A. Nordman in *Erik den Helige. Historia – Kult – Reliker* (1954). Both researchers were

[1029] Lahti 2002, 19–22. See also Lahti 2001; the work for my MA thesis in 2001 was used as a base for this chapter.
[1030] Montgomery 2010, 79.

archaeologists and successive directors of the Finnish National Board of Antiquities. Rinne's hypothesis was that the reliquary held the mandible of St Henrik, the majority of whose relics were probably kept in Turku Cathedral, while Nordman considered it to belong to St Eric, whose body rests in Uppsala Cathedral. In my Master's thesis (2001), I inspected their respective arguments and concluded that neither of them had been able to present conclusive results. Both theories were built on assumptions and probabilities, as one is indeed compelled to do with many of the Nordic reliquaries discussed here. Most recently, the reliquary has been studied by archaeologist Aki Arponen, whose work is mainly focused on dating and technical analysis, while the object is primarily seen as a relic.[1031] My own analysis is concentrated on the reliquary as a sacred object with two means of representation, that is, two images.

Until Rinne began his research in the 1920s, the general assumption was that the embroidered reliquary contained relics of another local bishop – Blessed Hemming. This was probably based on the fact that the reliquary was kept in the wooden shrine known as Hemming's coffin, although the attribution of the shrine is uncertain – as we saw in chapter 2. In 1869, the local pastor A. Lindman wrote a small guidebook to the cathedral that included a passage which may be the first written description of the reliquary: he mentions a red silk bag with a skull, traditionally thought to be Hemming's, and some bundles containing human bones – all in the coffin of Bishop Hemming.[1032] As the reliquary was only made of these bundles of bone and linen, it is understandable that it might have lost some of its skull-shape over the centuries so that it would appear to be a "bag with a skull". In the first photographs of the object from the 1920s, the reliquary's inner structure seems to have collapsed so it might well have appeared like a bag, but the intended shape of a skull is still discernible.[1033]

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[1031] Arponen 2015, 104–116; Arponen & Maijanen & Immonen 2018, 149–183.

[1032] "en röd sidenpåse med en hufwudskalle, hwilken traditionen föregaf wara biskop Hemmings, samt några klutar, innehållande menniskoben", Lindman 1890, 20. Two historians, K. K. Meinander and J. W. Ruuth, repeat that information. Referred also in Nordman 1954, 303.

[1033] Branting & Lindblom 1928–29, 31.

Rinne found the reliquary and a number of other relics in the so-called Hemming shrine while supervising the renovation of the cathedral in 1924; he also found a skull without mandible in the niche of the sacristy mentioned earlier. The absence of the mandible in that skull and the existence of a mandible in the embroidered reliquary convinced Rinne that together these made up the skull of St Henrik. In 1954, Nordman countered this with a claim that the embroidered reliquary in fact belonged to St Eric and had been brought from Uppsala Cathedral, where the skeleton of St Eric was also lacking a mandible.[1034] Medieval sources do not directly support either of these two theories, but St Henrik is the only saint whose head relic is mentioned in connection with Turku Cathedral – in a sixteenth-century chronicle about the bishops of Turku, by Paulus Juusten. However, this is in connection with silver reliquaries (discussed above in chapter 8.1), not to silk ones. No other head relics are mentioned in any remaining sources from the diocese.

If the skull reliquary were St Henrik's, it would have probably arrived in the cathedral – accompanied by other relics – in time for the consecration of the building in approximately 1300, as he was one of the cathedral's patron saints. If the reliquary was St Eric's, then it might have been brought there from Uppsala about a hundred years later, when the cathedral was celebrating its hundredth anniversary and St Eric became one of its patron saints. Nordman's hypothesis is that the reliquary was made in Uppsala, in around 1300, to be kept in the sarcophagus of St Eric together with the rest of his body, until it was brought to Turku in 1400 for the consecration of a new altar to St Henrik and St Eric. Nordman refers to a document describing the moment when St Eric's sarcophagus was opened in 1303, and St Eric's head was found, together with other parts of his body in "bundles". The embroidered reliquary could have been one of these bundles.[1035] To make a new reliquary and then store it for hundred years without use seems implausible, however.

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[1034] Nordman 1954, 303–320.

[1035] Nordman 1954, 316; 320. "[…] *predicta autem caput et membra composita et connexa fuerant in sex ligaturis siue massis*" .

The third candidate – Blessed Hemming – can be rather safely dismissed, as the iconography in the embroidered image cannot represent him; he never became a martyr.[1036] Moreover, there there are no references to a head reliquary for Hemming in any of the existing documents. Nevertheless, in the 1920s, textile historian Agnes Branting and art historian Andreas Lindblom still considered the possibility that the reliquary might have been dedicated to Hemming later, in spite of the embroidery.[1037] As Rinne suggests, the historical explanation for the reliquary ending up in "Hemming's shrine" is probably linked to the Reformation, as all the remaining relics from the cathedral were put into the smaller of the two wooden caskets for safekeeping.[1038] In the poetic imagination, of course, parallel histories are possible. The Finnish novelist Mika Waltari, for instance, was inspired by the red silk "bag" and the vivid description of Bishop *Electus* Gadh's planned festivities for Hemming's relics (referred above in chapter 2.4). In his 1948 novel, *The Adventurer* (*Mikael Karvajalka*), Waltari combines Gadh's text and his own knowledge of the existing red silk reliquary, including it in the ritual as representing the skull of Blessed Hemming.[1039]

The textiles and the embroidery of the reliquary were analysed by Swedish researchers: Agnes Branting wrote about them in her book, *Medeltida vävnader och broderier i Sverige* (1928–29), and Agnes Geijer's analysis is presented in the book, *Erik den Helige* (1954).[1040] There have also been attempts to date the bones: the first attempts were by anatomist Yrjö Kajava following Rinne's investigation in the 1920s and then in the 1940s, by anatomist B. E. Ingelmark, following

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[1036] The mandible was also dated as several years earlier than Hemming's death; see Rinne 1932, 348; Nordman 1954, 306.

[1037] Branting & Lindblom 1928–29, 30.

[1038] Rinne 1932, 300–311; 332–334; Lindman 1890, 20.

[1039] Waltari 1950 (1948), 10–11. However, the sentence concerning the skull, roughly translated as "the holy skull was wrapped in a red silk bag", is not in the English version of the novel.

[1040] Research reports, photographs, newspaper articles and letters considering the reliquary are preserved in Antikvariskt-topografiska arkivet (ATA) in Stockholm and at the Finnish Heritage Agency (FHA) in Helsinki, and Svenska litteratursällskapet (SLS) in Helsinki.

Nordman's.[1041] Most recently, in 2015, Arponen used radiocarbon dating on the bones and textiles to find, in accordance with previous research, that they were of different ages and places of origin. Most of these fragments were clearly too old to represent either St Henrik or St Eric – except for a piece from the top part of the cranium, which dated from between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, which was when the two saints supposedly lived. All of the textiles were more recent, dating from between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries. Arponen argues that the reliquary may have been constructed in and around the year 1300 – either in time for the consecration feast of Turku Cathedral, or some decades later to replace reliquaries that were lost in an invasion by Novgorodian troops in 1318.[1042]

In an article co-authored by Arponen with Visa Immonen and Heli Maijanen, the authors also discuss the possibility of the reliquary's association to the cult of St Ursula, but discard this option, stating that one of the bones is even too old to belong to the Roman graveyards in Cologne, where the relics of the 11,000 Virgins were supposedly found.[1043] In my view, the bone's different origin does not exclude the possibility that the reliquary was nevertheless made and perceived primarily as a representation of the 11,000 Virgins.

After Rinne's investigations in the 1920s, the reliquary and the other relics were stored at the National Board of Antiquities in Helsinki, but also exhibited in Turku Cathedral Museum during the 1970s,'80s and '90s. The exhibitions and research projects sparked off a public discussion concerning its rightful place. In 1946, Nordman's new theories were reviewed and criticised by, among others, Rinne and the popular columnist "Olli", who expressed his doubts humorously in a piece entitled "The Highly Honoured Lower Jawbone", arguing that it wasn't fair to let His Majesty, King Eric rest in his grave without his jawbone, if it really was his.[1044] In the 1970s and '80s, arguments began to appear in local newspapers demanding that the reliquary be returned to Turku Cathedral, but in 1989, the

[1041] Kajava 1932, 336–345; Nordman 1954, 309–313.
[1042] Arponen 2015, 104–116.
[1043] Arponen & Maijanen & Immonen 2018, 149–183.
[1044] Olli, "Kunnianarvoisa alaleuka". *Uusi Suomi* 30.3.1946. On the debates, see Lahti 2007, 81–82.

Cathedral Dean Jukka Paarma clarified that the church did not want the relics back, as they would be better looked after at the NBA.[1045] In the late 1990s, however, the debate flared up again until eventually, in July 2007, the relics, including the embroidered skull reliquary, were finally returned to the cathedral.

**A Unique Structure**

At first sight, the Turku reliquary resembles a human skull wrapped in silk, and the illusion is probably intentional, but already the dimensions hint at a divergence between the shape and its contents – the head is smaller than a normal human adult skull.[1046] The head-like shape is made up of twenty-one linen bundles with bone fragments, sewn together with white linen thread. The base of the structure is a mandible, wrapped in several layers of linen, and the rest of the pieces are supported on top of it. Another larger fragment is from the top of a cranium, wrapped and sewn together with smaller packages resting behind the mandible and small pieces of linen have been added to help make up the shape. The combined sewn-together packages are then further wrapped in two larger pieces of linen cloth and sewn up.

Covering these linen layers are two layers of silk which hold the whole structure together. The inner layer consisting of irregular pieces of light brownish silk is sewn directly on to the linen.[1047] Finally, the top layer is of crimson red, only slightly faded silk damask, also sewn together from two different pieces whose forms do not seem to directly correspond to their place in the resulting head shape.[1048] Despite the rather irregular seams sewn with a rough, faded silk thread, the two silk layers fit snugly over the linen packages. On the right side of the reliquary, the layers have worn through and ripped

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[1045] *Turun Sanomat* 21.5.1989.

[1046] According to the most recent measurements, its height is 120 mm, depth 192 mm, and width 141 mm. In 1954, Nordman and Ingelmark had measured it to be slightly smaller: 115 x 185 x 130 mm. The differences can perhaps be explained by its irregular shape and pliant form, making the contours softer and rounder than in a skull. See Nordman 1954, 303; Arponen & Maijanen & Immonen 2018, 155.

[1047] Arponen 2015, 113; on the dye, see e.g. Geijer 1994 (1972), 297–304.

[1048] Geijer 1946, 1. Thanks to Mari-Louise Franzén of the Swedish History Museum in Stockholm for finding the drawing for me. During research for my MA thesis, I could not find it among Geijer's papers in the archives.

so that now part of the inner structure and some green ribbon is visible. A fragment of the silk was also found in the folder of a collector of antiquities.[1049] Arponen also notes that the front of the object seems to have been violently opened before the time of Rinne's investigation.[1050] The reliquary also suffered several interventions by researchers and conservators, which have inevitably altered the original shape despite all due care being taken. Since the reliquary was brought to the National Board of Antiquities, it has been opened, inspected and slightly repaired a few times.[1051]

The irregular seams may be a result of the structure losing some of its original shape and then being readjusted. Some bones or packages may have been added, removed, or moved around – at least, some packages seem to be missing.[1052] These changes have had a surprising effect on the embroidered image, though: the lower part of on the straighter-looking left side of it is now partly hidden from view under the chin, while on the more collapsed right side, the image is fully visible. One explanation for this irregularity in shape could also be that the silk was once sewn over a real skull, which was then lost at some point and needed to be replaced by the linen-bone construction.

The aperture in the face reveals the hollow structure – although in dim candlelight in the church, one would only see it as darkness. The edges of the aperture are embroidered with thin, plaited gold thread across both the silk layers.[1053] Rinne suggested that the aperture was only in the two silk layers originally, and that the hollow cavity was

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[1049] Nordman 1954, 318. In a footnote, Nordman mentions that Rinne ordered the piece to be reattached, but Rinne does not mention it in his book, so it must have taken place later.

[1050] Arponen 2015, 110.

[1051] In the 1920s, a spherical piece of canvas and iron wire was added to support the top. In 1946, Geijer partially removed the wire, but left the linen and canvas over the forehead and chin untouched, even if she thought them somewhat clumsy. She also reattached the relic packages to each other with large stitches, repaired the most worn-out parts of the inner silk and refastened the green ribbon that had come loose on the right to look like the one on the left. Arponen, who studied the inner structure most recently, argues that the collapse of the facial structure is due to Geijer's removal of the metal wire. On this, see Geijer 1946, 10; Arponen 2015, 106; Arponen & Maijanen & Immonen 2018, 160.

[1052] Arponen & Maijanen & Immonen 2018, 162.

[1053] Rinne 1932, 346; Geijer 1946, 1; Nordman 1954, 303.

once covered by the outermost white linen layer. This would then have been ripped open later, just like the silk on the right side, by curious visitors.[1054] Nordman doubts that, however, as do I. The way the linen is sewn around the edges of the aperture is no different from the way the silk is sewn.

Although the Turku reliquary is unique in many ways, there are similar small, head-like constructions of seemingly random pieces of bone and cloth in Central Europe, too. Schnütgen Museum in Cologne has two such objects, assembled from various different pieces of textile into a skull-like shape (see images 41c-d). It does not seem far-fetched to think they might stem from the same, possibly amateur, artisanal tradition. However, the Cologne examples are visually less sophisticated and do not have any embroidery.

**The Rarity of Silk**

The outer layer of silk in the reliquary is a four-shaft twill damask with a lively and asymmetrical pattern of longish narrow clouds, waves, and two symbolic animals: a long-necked crested phoenix with wings spread wide; and a turtle with its head held high, clawed feet extended, and a lotus flower on its back.[1055] In its original oriental context, each silk pattern would have its own meanings, most of them almost certainly unknown to the Europeans who later used them.

According to Geijer, this silk is the oldest known piece of Chinese silk damask in Europe. She estimates it to be a thirteenth-century product, coinciding with the trade routes opened by the Mongols, which made Chinese silk available in Europe. The papal inventories include several such "tartar" textiles in 1295.[1056] Arponen's radiocarbon dating seems to confirm Geijer's estimate, placing the silk between the early 13th and late 14th centuries.[1057] Those valuable oriental textiles had a strong influence on the European textile production, as Italian weavers started using asymmetry in the 14th

[1054] Rinne 1932, 336.
[1055] This description is a paraphrase of Nordman's description, which in my view sums up the pattern well. Nordman 1954, 304.
[1056] Rinne 1932, 346; Geijer 1951, 97; Geijer, without specific reference, quoted by Nordman 1954, 305; Geijer 1994, 141.
[1057] Arponen 2015, 113.

century.[1058] Clouds and birds are typical Chinese motifs often copied in Italian fourteenth-century silks, but turtles are less common in medieval textiles,[1059] and Chinese silks were certainly very rare in medieval Sweden.[1060]

Through trade contacts across the Baltic, Nordic commissioners and artisans could get hold of precious textiles. It was not uncommon that wealthy people donated clothes to the church, but the colour of this silk excludes the possibility of a secular owner. Expensive silks, particularly those of the cochineal red, were usually only available for the church. It might therefore have served as a liturgical cloth before being so worn out that there only was enough of it to make a small reliquary, or the reliquary could have been made of the spare pieces left after cutting the silk for a larger item. If the silk really was brought to Turku via the new Mongol trade routes, however, it must have travelled quickly if it was to have got there in time for the translation of St Henrik's relics and the consecration of Turku Cathedral in 1300, *and* to have been used for some other purpose even before that. This could also be used as an argument against theories that involve St Henrik.

Even if the silk did have a different use before becoming a reliquary, another relevant question is whether the embroidered image, on its irregularly shaped piece of silk, was actually made for this reliquary or a previous object.[1061] An example of a different use for embroideries with decapitation scenes is an episcopal cope preserved in Uppsala Cathedral.[1062] Geijer thought, furthermore, the inner layer of silk was unnecessary for the reliquary and that perhaps the silks were used in some kind of reliquary purse prior to this.[1063] However, combining one layer of linen with two of silk is a common formula for relic-wrapping.[1064] Another kind of embroidered object with an inner

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[1058] Geijer 1994, 141; 142–144.
[1059] Nordman 1954, 304; Rinne 1932, 346; Geijer 1979, 114; Geijer 1946, 2.
[1060] Nordman 1954, 305.
[1061] Nordman 1954, 315.
[1062] Nordman 1954, 306.
[1063] Geijer 1954, 296. SLSA 652, letter from Geijer to Nordman 21.10.1948.
[1064] For instance, the bone of Mary Magdalene that was famously bitten by Hugh of Lincoln is described as wrapped in that way; see e.g. Hahn 2012, 233.

silk lining would be a mitre. Nevertheless, two layers of silk in a skull reliquary are not unusual at all, as we have seen in the above-mentioned skull hood found in Turku Cathedral. Furthermore, the irregular cut and stitching do not exclusively indicate previous use; as Geijer points out, medieval textile objects have "irregularities that now would be considered disrespectful for such costly material" and besides, sewing a tight-fitting cover such as this cannot have been an easy task.[1065]

**Loops and Stitches for Cultic Display**

The reliquary seems to have had an arrangement that allowed it to be suspended for display. This consisted of a green, plaited silk ribbon running under the silk at the front and on each side of the reliquary. On the intact left side, it is visible as a small loop, but as a result of the damage on the right, a longer part of it is revealed. Between the two sides, the ribbon runs over the face and is visible in the middle as a third small loop, slightly lower than the other two, but not noted by previous researchers. The silk is worn out there – the middle of the face makes a vertical angle from the cheek up to the aperture, and that has exposed the silk to extra wear. Due to that, more of the green ribbon is visible through the worn-out silk. Similar loops are not found in other surviving textile skull reliquaries in Europe. The plaited ribbon is itself, despite its simplicity, not very common either. Arponen has dated the ribbon to come from between the early 14th and mid-15th centuries.[1066] A nearly similar ribbon was found in the brocade purse made for St Eric's vertebra in Uppsala Cathedral. According to Geijer, no other ribbons made that way are preserved from the Middle Ages, probably meaning these two were made in the same workshop. The attachments of the ribbons to the head reliquary and the purse do not resemble each other, but they show the same practical inventiveness – supporting her theory that both ribbons, as well as both textile reliquaries, were made and used in Uppsala.[1067]

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[1065] Geijer 1954, 289 (free translation mine); freely referred also by Nordman in the same book p. 320.

[1066] Arponen 2015, 114.

[1067] Geijer 1954, 291–295; 300; Strömberg (report on investigation in 1949) quoted by Geijer p. 300.

Geijer suggests the loops were installed to be able to attach the reliquary via small hooks to an ostensorium for display and processional use.[1068] Suspending the reliquary brings to mind Petrus de Dacia's report of transporting a head relic or reliquary strung round his neck, but my impression is that the loop arrangement would not have held the entire weight of the reliquary; the attachment to a supporting structure, as suggested by Geijer, seems more plausible. The loops on the left and in the middle are so small – about 0.3 cm – that the eventual hooks must have been made of very thin metal wire. The small size of the loops also makes sure that it would not hang loosely, but sit tight. Also, if the reliquary were only to hang by these loops, it would have tilted backwards, as the loops are in front of its current centre of gravity. An interesting hypothesis in terms of the cult could be that the image was intentionally made to continue at least partly under the chin – this would imply that it was designed to be seen slightly from below and in a tilted position, perhaps within a supporting structure, while carried in a procession. This idea corresponds somewhat to Geijer's hypothesis of the reliquary being suspended in an ostensorium.

Another possibility is that the loops were not there to suspend the reliquary but to attach something else to it to complement the visual effect. On the reverse side of the reliquary, there are no signs of ribbons or loops, but instead, seemingly useless stitches of faded red silk thread which could be where silver, gems, crystals or pearl decorations had once been. Geijer considers them generally atypical for embroidered silks and to have been made more recently than the embroidered image.[1069] For textile reliquaries in general, however, they are not unusual. The attached decorations would indicate that the reliquary was meant to be seen from different angles and directions, which tallies with the idea of the reliquary being carried in procession or kept in a transparent ostensorium. Both the metal decorations and the ostensorium would, in Geijer's theory, have been

[1068] Geijer 1954, 294–295.

[1069] Geijer 1947 (report for the ATA, Stockholm) quoted by Nordman 1954, 305–306; 318.

added in the late 14th century,[1070] perhaps due to a change in cult practices.

The part of the embroidered image that is only visible from under the chin, depicts the feet of the kneeling saint. In their current condition, the feet are somewhat clumsily portrayed and their position less realistic than the feet of the saint's enemy. Seen from below, however, the position seems more natural. A conscious play with perspective is not very likely in a medieval embroidery, though. Geijer's theory of the embroidery being older than the other details is further motivated by the observation that the silk pieces seem to be sewn together with the same thread as the remaining stitches from the lost decorations.[1071]

As Rinne and Nordman have observed, the surface of the reliquary is glossy and smooth, particularly at the back of the head and on the left cheek, from repeated touching and probably kissing.[1072] The experience of the *virtus* of the sacred object was not only visual, but tactile – the kiss being a gesture of gratitude. The religious sentiment towards relics often involved the need to acquire some particles of them for oneself by touching, kissing and in extreme cases, like the famous example of Bishop Hugh of Lincoln, even biting them.[1073]

**An Embroidered Martyrium**

As stated above, silk skull reliquaries are usually only embroidered with ornamental patterns. The silk skull reliquary in Turku is one of the very few exceptions[1074] and may be the only one with a martyrium image.

The embroidered image depicts a saint being decapitated by a knight or soldier with a sword. The image is worn to the point where

[1070] Geijer 1954, 294–295.

[1071] Geijer 1954, 296; see also Nordman 1954, 316 (referring to Geijer without source details).

[1072] Rinne 1932, 335–346; Nordman 1954, 303.

[1073] Bynum 2011, 65; Hahn 2012, 233–234; see also Dyas 2014, 1–7. An earlier account of biting a holy relic so as to possess it, is in the fourth-century *Itinerarium ad loca sancta* of the pilgrim Egeria. See e.g. *Egéria* 1998, 219–221.

[1074] In the St Ursula collection in Cologne, one reliquary has a relief embroidery of a bird feeding its offspring; possibly a pelican – the symbol of self-sacrificing love. See Legner 1995, 282: image 134.

it makes it difficult for the saint to be recognised. Most of the remaining relics in Turku have a parchment *authentica* still attached to the linen or silk knots around the bone fragments, but the embroidered silk head may never have had one. The image, when intact, was most likely an unambiguous explanation of the contents and identity of the reliquary; at least in the eyes of its medieval audience.

The man in armour stands on the left, with his sword drawn and recently swung; he looks calm – there is no sign of fury. The dead saint on the right, however, is still gesticulating with large hands – disproportionately large in order for their message to be easily read, but because the remaining stitches are damaged, it is hard to know if he or she is praying or making the sign of a blessing with two fingers held up. The saint's head lies on the ground between the two figures, near the tip of the sword. There is the hint of a *gloria* above the head; and some blood runs from the neck and head of the beheaded.

The armoured man wears a yellowy green knee-length mantle with deep slits, outlined in dark brown. Under the mantle, he wears chainmail sewn with gold thread, a hood of the same material covering his shoulders, and mittens. The long sword is sewn in gold as well, and the sheath on his belt is dark brown, outlined with gold. The martyr wears a light blue mantle over white cloth and dark brown shoes. The hair and the halo above the severed head are sewn with yellow silk and gold thread. The outlines and folds in the martyr's clothes are made with gold thread. The faces of both figures and the neck and hands of the martyr are sewn with white silk, but dark brown stitches are visible underneath.[1075] The killer's outfit and weapons correspond to the styles of 13th or 14th centuries, but the embroidered sword seems wider than most real medieval swords, and its sheath is not straight, as if it was made of a softer material – perhaps consequences of the embroidery technique.

The embroidery is made in yellow, dark brown, sky-blue, and white silk thread and a gold thread made of gilt silver or copper spun on silk.[1076] On some spots, the colour seems brighter and might have

[1075] Nordman 1954, 305.

[1076] Geijer 1946, 3; Nockert 1997, 203; see also Nylén 1950, 15.

been repaired. Without further technical analysis of the pigments, it is difficult to say how strong the colours once were; for instance, the blood streaming over the saint's neck might have been intentionally pale to be visible against the red background. The technique employed is laid work, often with a regular diagonal pattern.[1077] The embroidery has been compared with works by the Birgittines of Vadstena, and Albertus Pictor's workshop in Stockholm; but Branting, Lindblom and Nordman believe that it was made in Uppsala, modelled on the embroidery found on a French cope in Uppsala Cathedral.[1078] However, the cope might actually be younger than the reliquary, and there are many dissimilarities between the images.

The image, though once clearly of good quality,[1079] might seem relatively clumsy to the modern viewer. No details of the two figures' faces are visible, and the hands seem to have been larger and more detailed than they are now. Around the hands one can even see a drawn line showing their intended form. It seems obvious that they were worn out and then clumsily repaired. The stitches are longer, less regular, and the thread seems thicker; the stitches would be too loose even for a bottom layer of the embroidery. This cannot be the original state of the image, as the hands and face are usually the most expressive and detailed part of any image. Other details that have become worn-out, like the scabbard or the killer's shoes, are not repaired. Here and there, the absence of stitches is only marked by needle-holes – one attribute, for instance, that might have helped recognise the saint probably existed near the small and unclear halo. That the hands and faces are missing or damaged seems particularly striking in a reliquary which represents a head, but refuses to represent a face, substituting the face instead with this martyrium.

Although few details are discernible due to wear and tear, researchers have seen many details in the sword, the armour and the clothes, perhaps led by their own research hypotheses.[1080] Both Rinne and Nordman date the embroidered image to 1300 from the clothing,

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[1077] Geijer 1946, 3; see also Nylén 1950, 14–15.

[1078] Nordman 1954, 306; Branting & Lindblom 1928–29, 30.

[1079] Geijer thinks the image implies a skilled and experienced embroiderer; see Geijer 1946, 3–4.

[1080] Nordman 1954, 305; Geijer 1946, 3.

but otherwise they read the details differently. Rinne, convinced that the reliquary was of St Henrik, describes the figures as a knight and a bishop; for him, the saint's shoes and mantle are episcopal attributes; whereas Nordman claims the martyr's clothes are the kind worn by apostles and holy kings.[1081] Considering the literary and visual hagiography of St Henrik and St Eric, the embroidered image seems to have more in common with St Eric, who is generally thought to have been killed with a sword. The first known image of a decapitated St Eric, with his head on the ground, is in a fifteenth-century wall painting in Risinge Church, Sweden. As in the embroidered image on the skull reliquary, the body of the king is still kneeling and praying, with his hands in the same position; the crowned head is on the ground in front – looking peaceful with eyes closed – and blood is gushing from the neck, which the soldier still seems to be cutting with his sword.[1082] As no historical connection between the two images has been found, the similarity could be explained by the existence of a third image that could have been used as a model for both the painting and embroidery. If the saint in the embroidered image was Bishop Henrik, however, it would be the only medieval representation of such a death in his iconography, as his traditional martyrium attribute is an axe.[1083] Martti Haavio, who argued that the reliquary was originally a relic of Bishop Henrik's cap, suggested furthermore that the embroidered hands were intentionally depicted as damaged to associate the image to two other relics of St Henrik,

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[1081] Rinne 1932, 347; Nordman 1954, 306–308.

[1082] The image is reproduced in Thordeman (ed.) 1954, PL. XXXIII.

[1083] An exception is an Italian 16th-century drawing of St Henrik being killed with a dagger, reproduced and discussed in Rinne 1932, 268–269. For more on the two saints' attributes, see Rinne 1932, 39; 233–234; 347–349; Nordman 1954, 308–309; Thordeman 1954, 173–232. Rinne found support for his interpretation in the oral tradition on Henrik's death, where the Lalli is said to have taken a sword: *Lalli otti laakaris, / Benti pitkän keihäs / ja Ouleva ison otas.* Even that poem, however, does not refer to Henrik being decapitated. The choice of weapon in the poem could be because the *la* syllable at the start of both words rhyme. The mention of two other men – with saintly names – has been interpreted as irrelevant to the content, added only to comply with the traditional trope of three men with different weapons and with the traditional Kalevala meter, in which the two last lines are often meant to repeat and confirm the contents of the first. See Haavio 1948, 91–92.

namely his cut-off finger and ring.[1084] He has no explanation for why the faces in the embroidery are damaged though.

Of course, the saint represented by the reliquary need not be a Nordic man. Indeed, from what little remains of the image, it could be that the saint is a woman – St Catherine of Alexandria, for instance, was decapitated and often has a sword as her attribute. St Ursula and her companions, the 11,000 Virgins, were beheaded as well; and if the reliquary represented the latter, there would be no iconographic incoherence. In Hans Memling's painting on the Ursula shrine in Cologne (1489), Ursula is portrayed facing her death at the hands of soldiers in chainmail – and wearing a blue dress. The blue dress in the embroidery was hardly just a technical solution for the figure to be visible against the red background; instead, it is known as one of the attributes of Virgin Mary and other holy virgins. Thus, I suggest it was chosen to express one aspect of the beheaded saint's identity.

**The Eloquent Head**

In the last couple of sections, we looked at both the embroidered image of the martyrium, and the structure of the skull reliquary it covers. In this section, we look at how they relate to each other and to the reliquary's contents.

The earlier iconographic approaches to the Turku head reliquary have concentrated on the embroidered image. The shape of the head has been interpreted as being either a real or an artificial skull, or a shapeless bag. Even when the construction was opened and observed, it was not interpreted. With the exception of Martti Haavio in 1948, who expected the reliquary to represent the cap of St Henrik, no other interpretations have been made of it.

The head reliquary is both a two-dimensional, embroidered image of a decapitation and a three-dimensional representation of a head. But before it became this 'imitation' of a skull, was it a 'normal' silk-covered skull and thus less sculptural, less of a representation, or was it built expressly to be an imitation in the first place? Was there a specific need for a simulated silk skull to substitute a lost skull or to represent a skull whose presence was needed but not accessible?

[1084] Haavio 1948, 138.

These questions might find their answers in the future, but while there is no other explanation for why various skull parts were made into a head-shaped reliquary, it was nevertheless intended to be that shape.

The relics of various saints have the role of supporting and complementing, not only the skull-shaped construction, but also the *virtus* of the saint represented in the image. Apart from their individual identities, saints were also members and representatives of the heavenly community as a whole.[1085] If the saint represented was actually St Ursula, the intentional presence of a saintly group – such as the 11,000 Virgins – in one reliquary would be quite natural. Multiple relics would also contribute to the actual size and the rare fact of being a reliquary made of relics.

The disruptive effect comes from the fact that the embroidery, placed on the face of this head-shaped structure, detracts from its likeness to a head. Not only is the embroidered image on a different scale, but it seems to replace the face. Nevertheless, the two aspects thematically support each other. The embroidered decapitation implies that the reliquary represents not just a head, but the very same decapitated head that is depicted in the martyrium.

The martyrium is a Gothic display of death and suffering. The severed head and the blood running from the martyr's neck make the cruelty and pain clear to the viewer. The scene could be from the legends of several saints, as Christian iconography recognises over forty decapitated martyrs, the first of whom was John the Baptist.[1086] Some decapitated martyrs, such as St Denis, were represented as *cephalophori*, carrying their own head. The double message of a head reliquary with the image of a decapitation on it is not common, but it also exists in the silver reliquary of St Candide in Saint-Maurice d'Agaune[1087]. However, the silver head is less puzzling and more typical: it has a face, and the martyrium does not interfere in eye contact with the saint, as it lies across the base of the object, confirming its three-dimensional message.

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[1085] See Hahn 1997b, 1080–1081; on head reliquaries containing relics of various saints, see also Wittekind 2005, 107–135.

[1086] *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie* 1976: 17*.

[1087] See e.g. Wittekind 2005, 123.

The viewer of the embroidered reliquary expects to see two holy faces, but none of the faces look back at the viewer. The place of the sculpted face has been taken by the embroidered martyrium, and the face of the saint in the martyrium is damaged. The open forehead may evoke a gaze, when nothing else in the face does that. Why a head-shaped structure without a face? An object recognisable as a head might be easier to relate to than for instance a bag of relics, but a faceless head is also confusing. Most of the other silk skulls are faceless as well, but in a different sense – their faces are covered with ornamental decorations (see images 41a-b). In the holy heads of Cologne, the *memento mori* look of the skulls' empty eyes is discreetly covered, yet the opening in the silk reveals a flat bone surface of the forehead; in the Turku reliquary, the open forehead implies that the contents or relics inside could be seen, although in reality they would have been invisible in the dark inside the skull and further wrapped and sewn in linen, never to be really seen. The image is thus perhaps a substitute for the unseen relics and refers to them instead, which was the function of images in many different reliquaries before the time of monstrances.

Is there reason to believe in a connection between the embroidered silk skull of Turku and the younger, richly decorated silk skulls known in Central and South Europe? Among the extant examples, the Turku reliquary is unique in its construction and narrative hagiographical theme. The shape and materials, on the other hand, are very similar. The Turku reliquary may not have been the only one of its kind in Europe, even if it is the only one remaining now. It could also be the oldest existing "holy head" of silk. The survival of medieval items, particularly textile ones, is so coincidental that radical conclusions cannot be drawn from what exists at the moment. If the Turku skull turned out to be the only surviving example of an earlier Cologne tradition of skulls with narrative embroideries, the peripheral location in Turku could explain why it was not refashioned or substituted.

A plausible explanation as to its uniqueness might also be local innovation. Drawing inspiration from a silk-clad skull relic, an artisan decided – or was commissioned – to imitate it with an artificially built skull shape and improve it with hagiographical embroidery.

Whatever solution was decided upon, the intentions behind it are yet to be discovered.

In this assessment of the embroidered skull construction, the iconographic analysis of the shape and the martyrium image indicated the cult of St Ursula as the most likely original context for the object. For a medieval viewer, the embroidered image would have been in a better condition and its subject matter more familiar than it is to us. At the moment, it is not even certain whether the reliquary or embroidery were made specifically for Turku or if it was given a new cult identity once it was received by Turku Cathedral. As I suggested regarding the Birgittine silk reliquary, this skull-shaped construction may also have been reinterpreted according to local needs in Turku. Another possibility is that the reliquary was purchased by the Guild of St Ursula for the altar of St Ursula, which was only founded in the later half of the 15th century.[1088] In that case, if the dating of the object is correct, it would not have been commissioned by the guild, but purchased "second-hand", perhaps through a process reminiscent of Petrus de Dacia's dealings in Cologne. The ongoing scientific analysis of the object's material constitution may soon produce information that will shed more light on its age and origins, either supporting or contradicting my hypothesis. Meanwhile, although Blessed Hemming as well as St Henrik and St Eric were dismissed as prime candidates to the saint represented, their long-lasting presence in the reliquary's historiography has already made them additional constituent elements in its identity.

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Head reliquaries were the centrepieces of their respective churches, and their memory remained long after the objects themselves were lost; St Birgitta's head was known for its healing power, and the heads of the Eleven thousand Virgins were remembered as interacting with clerics and congregation by singing and nodding. Many Nordic accounts of *inventio*, or the discovery of relics, contain references to holy heads that were miraculously found due to a shining light or a

[1088] Juusten 1988, 63; Rinne 1941, 315–320.

lovely smell; I speculatively suggested that these accounts may also reflect some aspects of the reliquaries made for those heads.

With the approximately fifty lost Nordic head reliquaries found in medieval documents and discussed in this chapter, they turn out to have been remarkably more numerous than what was previously known. Several head reliquaries were made for the local saints, and at least two silver heads were received as royal gifts from England. Like elsewhere in Europe, the majority of the head reliquaries were related to St Ursula and the Eleven thousand Virgins. Even the three surviving Nordic head reliquaries seem to be at least stylistically related to these Virgins from Cologne, although their exact medieval provenience is unknown.

# III
# HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY PATRONS: THE SOCIAL LIFE OF RELIQUARIES IN THE NORTH

The history of relics and reliquaries in Nordic countries follows largely the same lines as elsewhere. Local differences can often be traced back to the people and social networks behind each cult and its practices. Those people consist of both the local saints and the local people interacting with the relics and reliquaries. In some cases, these two roles coincide – St Birgitta, for example, was involved in the cult of relics and later became an object of cult herself. Saints will, however, stay in the background in Part III, as the real protagonists here are the earthly patrons: the known Nordic commissioners, the donors, and the owners of relics and reliquaries. These were mainly rulers and ecclesiastic authorities, but also private individuals can be found in the written sources. We will not only look at the circumstances under which they were in contact with the precious items, but also how reliquaries were handled in church, or during processions, as well as their maintenance and eventual disposal. Part III ends with a brief survey of the current whereabouts of reliquaries in Nordic museums and churches; and the way they are perceived in modern Nordic societies.

## 9 – Relics in Nordic lives

Before moving on to the lives of reliquaries in chapters 10 and 11, the present chapter will briefly turn the focus on the history of relics in Nordic countries. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the cult context in which the social life of the medieval reliquaries took place. This is exemplified by looking at the role of relics in St Birgitta's life and cult. In order to understand the economic and political role of reliquaries, those aspects of relics are observed here, including known royal contributions to the Nordic cult of relics.

**From Ancient Cults to Pilgrimages**

In a recent article, Madeleine Gray is right to remind us that "[i]f, as Patrick Geary (and others) have said, relics are the repositories of constructed cultural and social meaning, that meaning will not be the same in all societies."[1089] And yet in Nordic countries these local variations were seldom remarkable – it was more a question of different saints and the development of their cults.

The pre-Christian religious diversity in the area can be seen as one of the local aspects in the background for emerging relic cults. The shift to Christianity, which began as early as the 9th century, was neither quick nor complete.[1090] Even after it became established, elements of ancient local mythologies, beliefs and even magical traditions lived on, often side by side with the doctrine and cult of the new religion. It is impossible to know exactly how these different world views merged in the minds of individuals, but clues have been found in medieval and early modern images, cult sites and texts. Martti Haavio's view was that the shift was a matter of changing the visual and material symbols. For him, reliquaries were a Christian equivalent of the *vakka,* which had an important function in pre-Christian Finland; both were containers of the sacred, the "symbol of a value", and of a religion binding the community together.[1091] Haavio could also have referred to the Nordic variants of ancestor cults or the treatment of sacred animal bones, such as bear or elk, as comparable to some aspects of the relic cult. Patron saints and miracles probably felt like familiar elements, not entirely unlike local gods or spirits of nature.[1092] In general, the pattern in the whole of medieval Europe seems to have been that urban centres became culturally very alike, whereas local languages and traditions lived on in the countryside, some of them surviving until the present day.

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[1089] Gray 2014, 164.

[1090] Krötzl 1995, 30.

[1091] "Katolisen kirkon pyhimyslippaat – tai, kuten Turun tuomiokirkossa, pyhimysten luita sisältävät silkkipussit – ovat roomalaiskatolisen kirkon piirissä täsmälleen samassa asemassa kuin kuvailemani vakat. Ne ovat arvon symbolin säilöjä." Haavio 1959, 150. *Vakka* means a bushel or casket for cereals, but is also the central element of a popular pre-Christian fertility feast which involved beer-drinking.

[1092] See also Angenendt 2010, 19.

In the cult of saints, for the dead body of a virtuous person to be transformed into holy relics, various practices and ceremonies were required. For the early Christians, the fragmentation of the body was unthinkable, but by the time the cult arrived in the North, it became business as usual.[1093] The "discovery" (*inventio*) of a relic was the beginning of its 'career' – if the body of the saint had not been treated as a relic immediately after his or her death. Inventions were necessary particularly when there was a need for new relics, and the public ceremony brought attention and legitimacy to them.[1094] This happened mainly in the early centuries of Christianity, when new saints were needed for the growing religion. In the Nordic sources, for instance the discovery of the Selje martyrs' skulls, discussed in the section on St Sunniva in the previous chapter, could be understood as one example. More typical during the late Middle Ages was that the sainthood was taken into account already at the burial, and the transformation of the corpse into relics was done consciously afterwards. The "translation" (*translatio*) – or placing of relics into a reliquary – was another milestone in the process of sanctification. This could only be arranged after authorisation from the pope, and that would only be granted after miracles had been carefully gathered and confirmed. At that point, the saint had not yet reached the official status of sainthood, but could already be called "blessed" (as in Hemming). In the translation ceremony, the relics would be exhumed from the previous – usually subterranean – tomb, venerated and presented to the participants. Then they would be deposited (*depositio*) in their new reliquary or altar, with an *authentica* attached.[1095] Translations could be repeated in the case of canonisation or other occasions when relics needed to be transferred to a new shrine or church.

Once installed in the church, the relics were officially ready to receive pilgrims who came to experience the presence of the saint.[1096] Some made the journey in the hope of miraculous help: being in the

[1093] McCulloh 1980, 313–324; Bynum 2011, 132; 192–194. For an excellent analysis of the treatment of bone relics in Nordic countries, see Kjellström 2017, 151–175.
[1094] Geary 1988, 177–178.
[1095] Angenendt 1997, 172–175.
[1096] Dinzelbacher 1990, 133–134; Angenendt 1997, 132–137.

presence of relics or having physical contact with them via a reliquary were the prerequisites for miracles to happen until at least the 13th century.[1097] By the time relic cults had established themselves in Nordic countries, miracles would increasingly happen at a distance in response to prayers. Prayers could be directed to a saint from basically anywhere: whether you were at home, on a journey, or in church before an image or reliquary. The material presence of relics must have enhanced the feeling of help being near, but it was no longer a necessary condition.[1098] Consequently, Nordic miracle stories end rather than begin with a pilgrimage to the relics. Miracle collections with stories of grateful pilgrims bringing votive gifts to the shrine also functioned as reminders of the importance of returning the favour granted by the saint. The most common reason for a pilgrimage, however, was neither the need for help nor gratitude, but simply devotion. Pilgrims were also often motivated by the promise of indulgences.[1099] Local, relatively short-distance pilgrimages were the most frequent, and this is reflected in the miracle collections of local saints. Some Nordic pilgrims would even go as far as the Holy Land, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela. Some made the journey for sake of penitence, others for devotional reasons, perhaps with the additional intention of bringing home relics.[1100] As the historian Kirsi Salonen has pointed out, even if they were for other reasons – such as ecclesiastic contacts or episcopal consecrations – all journeys to Rome could at the same time be pilgrimages.[1101]

Pilgrims often arrived on feast days, when the saints were carried in procession, addressed in prayer and praised in liturgy. The recommended itinerary of a pilgrim in Linköping cathedral is indicated in fifteenth-century letters of indulgences: several kneelings, songs and prayers were recommended at specific "stations", as well as kissing the ground, devotedly following the relics in a procession, and monetary contributions to the church.[1102] There were plenty of

[1097] Sigal 1985, 65.
[1098] Vauchez 1981, 522–524; Fröjmark 1992, 30.
[1099] Krötzl 2015, 43.
[1100] Se e.g. Liebgott 1981, 33–62; Krötzl 1994, 99–100; DF 5693.
[1101] See e.g. Salonen 2015, 85.
[1102] SDHK 17861; Källström 2011, 100–104.

feast days and processions throughout the year, but the *Festum reliquiarum* was a feast dedicated to all the relics. In all the remaining Nordic liturgical calendars, the day would always have at least the value of *duplex*.[1103]

A saint's presence would be enhanced when their relics were displayed. Although relics of internationally venerated saints were items of high prestige, their true local significance and cult value would grow and be tested in interactions with the local community.[1104] The relics gained their meaning with regard to everything associated with the saint: pilgrimages, miracles, stories and feast days, which all created favourable conditions for experiencing the material presence of the saint.[1105] St Henrik, Bishop of Turku, is an example of how the material presence of a saint does not presuppose his existence as a person: no direct historical proof of his life and activity has been found, and yet, several medieval sources confirm the activity of his cult.[1106] The saints could also enter in conflict with the community by expressing disagreement or failing to answer prayers; the congregation could react by a humiliation of the relics, placing them on the church floor.[1107] There are no historical records of the latter happening in Nordic countries though.

Laypeople's contact with relics was restricted and regulated by the clergy, but in unofficial cult sites or buildings, direct contact with 'the holy matter' was possible. Splinters of wood from holy buildings and handfuls of earth from particular sites were collected for healing purposes. This 'law of contagion' effect, typical of pre-Christian religions, would give cult sites the status of a large secondary relic. The splinters and the earth were believed to be healing and worthy

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[1103] *Duplex* was the second highest degree of religious feasts in the Dominican system. *Festum reliquiarum* was celebrated on different days in each diocese; for instance, Århus 15.6.; Lund 11.7.; Copenhagen's church of Our Lady, Sunday after St Jacob (25.7.); Odense, Sunday after Vincula Petri (1.8); Linköping 4.8.; Åbo 9.9.; Uppsala 24.9.; Slesvig 24.9.; Nidaros 13.10. See also Gallen – Norberg 1982, 49.

[1104] Geary 1988, 181.

[1105] Angenendt 1997, 162–166; Lahti 2007, 70–86.

[1106] REA 18 (1295 or 1296), 334 (9.11.1412), 335 (9.11.1412); Malin 1925, 218–223; Heikkilä 2005, 80–81.

[1107] Little 1993, 26–30. For more on the depicted interaction between believers and relics in Venice, see Munk 2006, 81–92.

keepsakes because of their assumed physical contact with the saint. Some of those venerated buildings also had the capacity for miraculous self-protection both from wearing out and burning down. They also punished those who ever tried to damage them – even if taking splinters from the walls apparently was acceptable.[1108]

**Saint Birgitta and the Cult of Relics**

Birgitta of Vadstena is the most well-known and influential of the Nordic saints: a visionary, a pilgrim, and founder of the Birgittine Order. Her cult and relics – not to mention her writings – have spread widely around Europe. She lived her last years in Rome, where she became known, and was then treated as a saint immediately after her death. In the North, the cult's centre was naturally Vadstena Abbey, envisioned by her and founded soon after her death by her nearest friends and relatives. In addition, many later Nordic saints have a connection to Birgitta: such as her daughter, Katarina; her relative, Ingrid of Skänninge; her confessors, Nils Hermansson and Petrus Olavi; her collaborator, Bishop Hemming of Turku; and Bishop Brynolf of Skara, of whom she had a vision that led to his beatification process.[1109]

Birgitta herself had an active relation to the cult of relics. Her own experiences with them are described in her revelations, which tell of her pilgrimages to the Holy Land, Santiago de Compostela, Rome and various other sites in Italy. She was given several relics during those visits, and also had several visions inspired by relics – often involving the saints appearing to confirm the authenticity of their relics.[1110]

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[1108] Fett 1909, 143; Rinne 1932, 29; Haavio 1948, 125–131; Jokipii 1956, 7–31; Hiekkanen 2003, 189.

[1109] *Revelations*, Chapter 108. Bishop Brynolf was declared *beatus* a century and a half after St Birgitta had a vision at his tomb in 1349.

[1110] In Naples, Birgitta received a relic of the Virgin Mary's hair from a dying nun and Mary herself appeared to confirm its authenticity. In another convent, Birgitta heard someone express doubt as to the authenticity of a relic of the Virgin Mary's milk, and soon after, she had a vision where Mary confirmed the milk was hers. In Rome, Birgitta got a relic of St Anne from the sacristan of San Paolo Fuori le Mura and had a vision of it; and she also had a vision at the tomb of St Matthew. See *Acta et processus canonizacione beate Birgitte*, 634–635; *Uppenbarelser*, Bok 4, kap. 129, tillägg; Bygdén-Gejvall-Hjortsjö 1954, 66, footnote 18; Räsänen 2009, 108; see also Westman, *Birgitta-studier* (1911); Schmid, *Birgitta och hennes uppenbarelser* (1940).

While visiting the relics of Thomas the Apostle in Ortona, Italy, Birgitta had a vision of him, and shortly after that, a small bone relic jumped up from his shrine into her hand – the saint himself wanted her to have his relic.[1111] Birgitta's first known pilgrimage was to visit St Olaf's body in Nidaros, in 1339. She made the voyage on foot with her husband, Ulf Gudmarsson, and it took them thirty days to reach Nidaros – they owned horses and could have ridden, but her devotion would not permit that.[1112]

Reliquaries – not just relics – also mattered to Birgitta. Even before moving to Rome, she received a fragment of the True Cross, that had lost its reliquary, and placed it in a pretty casket "to protect it from being held by unworthy hands". The relic had belonged to a young man who had inherited it in a golden crucifix. Through lack of money, he sold the reliquary and gave the relic to a pious woman, who then gave it to Birgitta. As with the other relics, Birgitta also had a vision of Christ confirming its authentic connection to his suffering on the cross. In giving away the relic (and reliquary) for the sake of money, the young man had, in Birgitta's view, abandoned the most valuable pearl in exchange for dirt.[1113] The rule of the Birgittine Order states – in the words of Christ, received by Birgitta in a revelation – that unnecessary collecting of gold and silver should be avoided, but it was acceptable to make reliquaries of gold, silver, or gems, as long as they were not over-embellished.[1114] This was a more tolerant stance than that held formally by the Cistercians, who not only banned large gold and silver crosses, but also sculptures and paintings.[1115] Nevertheless, medieval documents have recorded the presence of precious metals and religious artworks in the abbeys and churches of both orders.

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[1111] *Acta et processus*, 634: "*Et eodem tempore apparuit beatus Thomas dicens eidem domine Brigide: "Diu desideratum dabo tibi", et statim nullo tangente prodijt de ipsa capsa reliquiarum quoddam frusticulum vnius ossis beati Thome, quod recipiens domina Brigida cum gaudio reuerenter conseruavit illud."*

[1112] *Acta et processus,* 14; 309; 579.

[1113] *Acta et processus*, 635: "*Hijs igitur domina Brigida auditis fecit illud lignum sancte crucis reponi in capsa honorabiliter et reuerenter, ne ab indignis portaretur*."

[1114] *Den heliga Birgittas uppenbarelser*, band 4, 1959, 32.

[1115] Belting 1994, 304.

Relics played a role in friendships and alliances, too. Queen Blanche had given Birgitta a French reliquary – an ivory casket with, among others, a relic of the queen's ancestor, the French King Louis the Pious. In the vision she had concerning this reliquary, Birgitta stressed the need for these relics to be kept on an altar so as not to be forgotten.[1116] Her close connections with rulers clearly helped her found the Birgittine Order, too. The grounds on which Vadstena Abbey would eventually be built were a donation from King Magnus Eriksson and Queen Blanche. The royal couple planned the abbey church to be built as their future burial church, and that the high altar in particular would be adorned with the most precious relics and reliquaries, together with other ecclesiastic utensils, books, and textiles. These plans were expressed in their will, written in 1346, which also stipulated that their tomb be built in front of the high altar. Their wishes differed quite sharply from St Birgitta's own plans for the abbey, as for her, simplicity was essential. There should be no superfluous details that might distract people away from religious contemplation. The altars were only to have what was needed to conduct mass, nothing luxurious – the abbey should not even possess any silver or gold objects that were not necessary for the mass. In Birgitta's plan, there was no place for a royal tomb before the high altar.[1117]

The royal couple's plans were not realised, in the end, as they died in exile. Birgitta's ideals of simplicity were not followed entirely either. During its years as a successful pilgrimage site, the abbey gained a rich collection of ecclesiastic art, books, textiles and impressive reliquaries made of precious materials.[1118] Many of the reliquaries and treasures in Vadstena were known to have belonged to St Birgitta herself, among which were the gold and silver crosses she had brought from the Holy Land. According to a Vadstena abbess

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[1116] *Den heliga Birgittas uppenbarelser*, band 4, 1959, 161 (Chapter 59). According to the anecdote, the reliquary had gotten lost in St Birgitta's home and was found again through the vision. Birgitta Fritz has suggested that the idea of such an object getting lost or forgotten in the first place might be a sign of St Birgitta's reserve or lack of enthusiasm towards royal saints; Fritz 1992, 124. See also Fritz 2003, 291.

[1117] Fritz 2003, 289–292.

[1118] Fritz 2003, 296.

heard as a witness to St Katarina's miracle collection, the sheer number and quality of these reliquaries donated to the future abbey by St Birgitta was such that the abbess saw it as proof of the saint mother and daughter's royal family background.[1119]

When Birgitta eventually died in Rome (1373), her body was immediately treated as a holy relic and miracles were witnessed.[1120] The first miracle after her death was the transformation of her own relics. Her body was placed in a coffin at the church of San Lorenzo in Panisperna, but before her remains could be transported home to Sweden by St Katarina, they were going to be boiled with herbs so as to separate the flesh from the bones. However, when the coffin was opened, only Birgitta's bones (*ossa nudata*) and clothes were found – the flesh had miraculously gone, leaving only a little bit of her brain inside the skull.[1121]

Not all of St Birgitta's miracles are directly connected with her relics, but they are either near or present in many of them. After the relics arrived in Sweden, a large group of people followed the procession on their way towards Vadstena, and miracles happened: a mute 9 year-old boy took shelter from the rain under the relics' canopy and by the morning could talk.[1122] In 1374, Birgitta's bodily

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[1119] *Processus... b. Katerine de Vadstenis* 1942–46, 55–56: "*…cum mater sua Birgitta tam magnifice et liberaliter in redditibus mobilibus et immobilibus et eciam in preciosis clenodijs videlicet turribulis argenteis, crucibus aureis et deauratis ac eciam reliquiarijs aureis in diuersis artificiis et lapidibus preciosis politis monasterium Vastenense fundauit et dotauit, que clenodia aurea et argentea multum preciosa coram nobis commissarijs predicta testis produxit. Et dixit etiam testis, quod progenitores sancte Katerine vsi fuerunt illis clenodijs quondam in eorum capellis et oratorijs. Produxit etiam testis certas cruces aureas et argenteas valde preciosas, quas dixit testis fuisse a Terra Sancta per beatam Birgittam ad monasterium portatas. Dixit eciam testis, quod persone seruiles, tributarii et modice condicionis ac paruj status non relinquerent suis superstitibus successoribus et heredibus tanta bona predialia, reliquiaria et vasa argentea, quemadmodum progenitores beate Katerine relinquarunt monasterio Vastenensi*."

[1120] Before her burial, a sick lady visited the body and created a *brandea* by touching the saint's body with her belt. When she afterwards rubbed her swollen neck with the belt, she was healed. Another lady improved her health by spending the night close to Birgitta's corpse. *Acta et processus*, 283–284; 341.

[1121] *Acta et processus,* 284–285; 343.

[1122] Fröjmark 1992, 106; *Acta et processus*, 148.

remains arrived in Vadstena.[1123] Several small relics were donated to various churches in Sweden and abroad. Her horsehair shirt for punishment of the flesh, kept at the Birgittine convent in Rome, represents her in many aspects: she not only sanctified it by wearing it, but she also made it herself – a proof of her piety and voluntary suffering.[1124]

A small number of Birgitta relics were kept at San Lorenzo in Panisperna, too. On the day after her canonisation, they were shown to the public. A translation of these Roman relics was arranged in honour of the canonisation. The relics were moved to a new, decorated casket; its key was broken so it would not be used, and the casket was sealed with the red wax seals of three cardinals. The most prestigious participants – the pope, the Holy Roman Emperor and the King of England – then received parts of Birgitta's bones. When her relics were moved to a new reliquary, the old casket was broken into pieces that were then distributed to the people present. According to the description of lay brother Laurentius of Vadstena (Lars Romare), "the people were as happy as if they had received real corporeal relics".[1125] These kind of *brandea* could be made on purpose, but reliquaries and their parts become relics also when the relic is taken away or disappears.[1126] In Vadstena, when the large casket of Birgitta's relics was replaced by a new shrine in a translation, the old reliquary was repurposed differently: instead of giving it the role of a contact relic, it became the casket for the body of her daughter, St Katarina.[1127]

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[1123] Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 69. Some secondary relics, such as Birgitta's table and shirt, stayed in Rome, and there are documents of her relics donated elsewhere. Vadstena had a book on the cover of which it was written, already during the Middle Ages, that it was one of her relics. See also Tegnér 1997d, 248; 409.

[1124] For more on the horsehair shirt and other relics of St Birgitta, see Andersson & Franzén 1975.

[1125] Bygdén-Gejvall-Hjortsjö 1954, 36; Karlsson 1901, 14. "*alteram uero antiquam, qui sacra ossa prius inclusa stabant, praesentium populorum deuotioni in minima frustula diuiserunt et distribuerunt, quibus haud aliter populus contentus extitit, quasi ueras eiusmet sacri corporis reliquias reportasset*". According to a fifteenth-century source, her arm relic was kept in an arm-shaped silver reliquary at San Lorenzo. See Bauch 2016, 120.

[1126] Boesch Gajano 1999, 23; Dierkens 1997, 249; Sigal 1985, 41, 59.

[1127] See above in the chapter on Shrines.

**Relics in Power and Commerce**

The practices of acquiring relics and reliquaries in medieval Europe are relatively well documented and studied. However, concerning the majority of the individual objects mentioned in the remaining Nordic documents, it is difficult to find out how, when, and where they were made, purchased, and used.[1128] Some documents do reveal how groups of relics and reliquaries were handed over or bought. Relics and reliquaries were both produced locally and imported.

As holy as relics were, there were mundane aspects in their life. They were commodities that could be bought, stolen, or falsified.[1129] When they were donated, it was seldom without expectations of substantial compensation – economic, spiritual, or involving status or political power. However, as Patrick Geary has observed, even if relics are seen as commodities and their exchange systems and values can be analysed from that perspective, they are a different type of commodity because of their human origin – they must simultaneously be seen as "living people". The same applies to sacred images, though man-made, which might carry the saints' personal presence.[1130]

The possession of a whole saintly corpse gave churches, cathedrals and abbeys a position of power, both spiritually and materially. This was a great advantage, encouraging the local cult and pilgrimages, and enabling the wardens of the treasure to export relics to other churches and to negotiate relic exchange with the small, textile-wrapped fragments that were the most typical form of a saint's material presence.

Indeed, the best way of acquiring relics, from the early Middle Ages onwards, was simply to ask. Travelling abroad or corresponding with the owners of large relics provided excellent opportunities to bring up the possibility of a donation. These gifts strengthened the bonds between both parties and created a debt of gratitude, which was repaid by another donation, daily prayers or other favours.[1131] In 1493, the Bishop of Turku, Magnus Stjärnkors, wrote to the Bishop of

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[1128] For a recent analysis of Swedish written sources concerning relics, see Kjellström 2019, 201–203.

[1129] Geary 1986, 169–194; see also Angenendt 1997, 162–166.

[1130] Geary 1988, 188.

[1131] Geary 1988, 182.

Nidaros to ask for some relics of St Olaf, explaining that they were needed for the several churches dedicated to Olaf in Finland, and promising to send St Henrik's relics in return.[1132] No further documents of this exchange are known, but there is no apparent reason for the suggestion to have been rejected. Similarly, in 1463, the Swedish Cistercian Abbey of Säby in Julita applied for relics from the Bishop of Bergen and received fragments of St Sunniva's arm and John the Baptist's head from the cathedral's collection.[1133] As only the positive reply from Bergen is preserved, it is not clear whether the Prior of Säby actually asked for those specific relics, but the locally prominent Sunniva and the internationally acclaimed John the Baptist must have been among the most prestigious relics that Bergen possessed. Pilgrimages further abroad offered even wider possibilities for purchasing relics. Like St Birgitta, visitors to Rome would bring back various relics, and right up until just before the Reformation – in 1513 – several Nordic clerics received papal licences to acquire relics from Rome to improve their local churches, particularly from the Church of Saints Vincent and Anastasius.[1134]

Although buying and selling relics was less common, it did exist as an alternative when desired relics could not be obtained through social connections. An example of how relics could be bought through the post, based on active marketing, is preserved from Sweden. In 1288, Strängnäs Cathedral purchased several relics of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins (in this case, the Saints Odilia, Kristina, Emma and the entire body of St Basilia) from the Augustinian Abbey in Paris. The discovery of those and other Cologne relics by a brother from the Parisian abbey had been announced by the Cologne Cathedral chapter in 1287, and it was confirmed by the Archdeacon of Paris in 1289.[1135] The motivation for sending the announcement to Swedish church authorities seems to have been to imply that those relics were now available for purchase, although this was not stated directly.[1136] There were several St Ursula relics in Denmark as well. The prior of the

[1132] DF 4505; Molland 1982, 51.
[1133] DN 16:217.
[1134] DN 17:807.
[1135] SDHK 1419; 1383; 1443.
[1136] Thordeman 1958, 166–172.

Dominican Order, Petrus de Dacia, used his contacts in the Cologne area to purchase several relics in 1280 and again in 1287. In the letters to his German friends, he describes the anxiety of waiting for the purchased relics to arrive at Visby Abbey. He had either ordered them to be sent, or then bought them personally but been unable to carry them all home with him – and so was reminding his friends of the fifty relics they had promised him.[1137] (His acquisition of head relics in Cologne and Stommeln was discussed above in the section on head reliquaries.) The relic trade was clearly lucrative, and Cologne still has a wide collection of St Ursula relics in sumptuous reliquaries, particularly in the Church of St Ursula.

Another mundane aspect was the element of doubt concerning the authenticity of relics, which is expressed both in legends and in official documents. Examples of this can be found in the tradition concerning St Olaf. The classic *topos* of the "saint's incorrupt body" did not immediately convince everyone of his holiness. In Olaf's saga, Queen Alfiva is given the role of the sceptic, claiming it was not a miracle but rather a consequence of the sandy earth that St Olaf's relics and his coffin were as good as new one year after the burial. She demanded a fire test on a sample of his hair and moustache – another international *topos* for verifying relics. She was still in doubt after this, but nevertheless the translation of his relics was arranged.[1138] Also the holiness and authenticity of St Theodgar's bones was proved by fire in Vestervig, when a doubting bishop threw them twice to the flames and they leaped back to the altar.[1139] Sceptical attitudes towards relics have also been recorded in the Icelandic *Gudmundar saga biskups:* a doubting priest commented on the relics of St Olaf that there was no knowing if they were the bones of a holy man or that of a horse.[1140] Understandably, questions of authenticity are a necessary part of the history of relics. Even among those who believe in them, the authenticity of many relics has been doubted and tested. Another medieval *topos* causing dispute around relics was the question of ownership. The spiritual and material prestige brought by an

[1137] Asztalos 1991, 320–321; 394–398.

[1138] *Olav den Heliges saga,* kap. 244; see also Molland 1982, 53; Ekroll 2002, 67.

[1139] Danske helgens levned II, 337–338.

[1140] Skórzewska 2011, 107.

important relic or an entire body of a saint could be of crucial importance for the wealth, political power and regional relevance of a church or abbey.[1141]

The doubts about the authenticity were sometimes justified: because of their high commercial value, falsification of relics occurred. In the 13th century, the Archbishop of Lund, Anders Sunesen, officially forbade the carrying around of false relics or images of saints for monetary gain in the market place of Skanør. The forgers would mean unwelcome competition to the official cult, because the big, annual fish market at Skanør was a prime opportunity for the clerics to gather donations for one of the prebends in the cathedral.[1142] The donations received by a church and its altars were determined by the presence of the saint, and it also enabled saints to be economically active as actors in whose name land and other possessions were bought and administrated.[1143]

There were also political motives for raising suspicions about the authenticity of relics. In the 15th century, Sten Evertsson (Steno Effrardi) was made pastor of Skänninge, having proved his efficiency at gathering visitors and donations to the Church by spectacular displays of his wooden crucifix reliquary that supposedly contained a bone fragment of Christ himself. Hemming Gadh, who clearly wanted the position for himself, suspected Sten of forgery and managed to get papal approval to investigate the relic.[1144] Gadh had theology on his side, as Christ's body was believed to have ascended into Heaven, so the only known relics of him were secondary contact relics – with the exception of the holy prepuce (claimed by several churches in the Middle Ages) and his umbilical cord. Flaunting a bone of Christ was therefore quite an uninformed choice for any medieval cleric.

Internationally, thefts were one of the ways relics were acquired or moved from one church to another; as Patrick Geary has shown, there

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[1141] See e.g. Geary 1988, 200–208.

[1142] *Simul inhibet idem archiepiscopus, ne quis in eo foro imagines et fictas reliquias circumferat questus causa, imagines eiusmodi, si circumferantur, etiam confringi permittens.* DD 1 rk. IV nr 69; see also *Danmarks Riges Breve* I Rk. IV nr. 69; see also Müller 1830, 15; Jexlev 1976, 28–29; Liebgott 1982, 103.

[1143] Rinne 1932, 184–195; Ridyard 1988, 191–192.

[1144] Carlsson 1915, 58 (supplik 24.10.1495).

was a level of acceptance for this under certain circumstances. Legends were written to legitimise the thefts, claiming that the relics had willed themselves or agreed to be moved to a certain church.[1145] This *topos* is not typical of the Nordic cult of saints; the thefts of relics mentioned in legends or miracles of local saints are neither pious nor successful. According to a thirteenth-century chronicle, the relics of St Alban were stolen from the British St Alban's church by Danish intruders in the tenth century, and afterwards stolen back to Britain.[1146] The early historian Snorri Sturluson describes how marauding Wends stole a fragment of the True Cross from Nidaros, but they were punished by God and thereafter forced or convinced to return it.[1147] In 1518, a Danish captain tried to grab the arm reliquary of St Eric in Uppsala Cathedral, but he died instantly on touching it.[1148] In Århus, the canons were concerned that the lovely smell of St Nils' buried bones would attract relic thieves, so they were taken up and moved to a closet in the cathedral library.[1149] Relics and reliquaries would nonetheless get lost when churches were regularly raided and their treasures stolen, and the *ex-votos* and money donations that collected around saints' tombs attracted thieves as well.[1150]

**Royal Patrons**

In the early stages of Christianity and relic cults in Nordic countries, kings were often the first converts and important collaborators in establishing a cult and its networks (and they were later also active in bringing the Catholic period to an end in the sixteenth century). Indeed, several of the first local saints were kings, and furthering their sanctification and cult was naturally a priority to their descendants (often sons), who must have seen it as an opportunity to consolidate their own regency and the status of the royal family. In Denmark, the

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[1145] Geary 1978, 133–138.

[1146] Jørgensen 1899, 266–273.

[1147] *Heimskringla*, Harald Gilles og Magnus den Blindes saga, ch. 14. See also Andås 2004, 188.

[1148] Added afterwards in a different hand, in parenthesis: *dar was 1 kapteyn wollde Sante Ericus arm an gripen und bleff tor stunt doeth, miraculum*. SRS III:1, 31.

[1149] *Danske helgeners levned*, II, 313.

[1150] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 39; Krötzl 2015, 52.

first and foremost local saint was King Canute; in Norway, it was King Olaf; and in Sweden, King Eric. In the case of King Canute Lavard of Denmark, the political expedience of sanctification and translation in 1170 was particularly clear. His son, King Valdemar, arranged for the translation to occur at the same time as the coronation of the saint's grandson in order to add legitimacy to the latter. Even though it was a secondary translation, it was arranged with all due pomp and ceremony, with all Danish bishops present, plus one from Sweden and another from Norway. A gilt shrine was commissioned – the king obliged Esrom Abbey to finance the gilding – and the saint's body, wrapped in silk, was placed in it, following the tradition as performed elsewhere in the world.[1151] Relics, particularly of royal saints, were used in coronations of new rulers, too. In Nidaros, the shrine of St Olaf had the authority to confirm coronations, and in the 13th century, a fragment of the True Cross in a processional crucifix also became part of the ceremony – to be carried around both in coronations and on St Olaf's feast days.[1152] In Uppsala, the shrine of St Eric had the same role.[1153]

Pilgrimages and purchasing relics and reliquaries were considered suitable forms of religious devotion for medieval Nordic royalty. St Canute's brother and successor, King Eric I (Ejegod) is known to have made two pilgrimages to Rome in the 11th century, to gain support for Canute's sanctification and for an independent archdiocese in the North. He and his wife, Queen Bodil, died on their last pilgrimage to the Holy Tomb in Jerusalem. According to Saxo Grammaticus, they were offered valuable presents by the Byzantine Emperor in Constantinople, but they only wanted the "dust of saints", which they then sent "home" – which was possibly the town of Slangerup, where Eric had been born.[1154]

Rulers trusted in the power of relics during conflicts, too. The eleventh-century King of Denmark, Svend Estridsen, took a casket of

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[1151] *Danmarks historie* I, 1977, 337–338; *Danske helgeners levned,* I, 144–147.

[1152] Molland 1982, 52; Ekroll 2002, 82.

[1153] Bengtsson 2010, 140.

[1154] Lindahl 1990, 8; Krötzl 1994, 55–57; Saxo 12.1.5 [10]: "*Cumque Hierosolymam proficiscens Byzantium pervenisset, contracta varii generis ornamenta cum sacrorum cinerum reliquiis in necessarios usus domestici templi remittenda curavit.*" See also 12.7.3–5.

St Vincent's relics on board his ship before fighting the Norwegian Harald Hardrada;[1155] and in the 12th century, King Sverre of Norway had relics actually built into the stern and prow of his war ship as protection.[1156] The practice of swearing upon relics, as described in several medieval written sources and artworks such as the Bayeux Tapestry, was also familiar in Nordic early Christianity. Snorri Sturluson, for instance, recounts how King Sigurd Jorsalafar of Denmark acquired a relic of the True Cross in Jerusalem in 1110, but only after the Patriarch of Jerusalem and King Baldwin I assured him of the relic's authenticity by swearing upon a reliquary. In return, King Sigurd had to swear that he would keep it in a worthy place near the relics of St Olaf.[1157] Meanwhile, in *Sverres saga*, it is written that King Sverre demanded an oath to be sworn while touching both the Bible and a relic.[1158] Relics were sometimes also inserted into the thick, wooden covers of the Bible or other liturgical books, in which case it was even easier to swear on both holy objects at the same time.

Rulers and members of the nobility found it important to stay closely connected to the Church. This was facilitated by donating to it, or depositing relics and reliquaries, in various churches which they had received as presents from their peers. They also bequeathed some of their wealth to churches and abbeys – a famous example is the will of King Magnus IV Eriksson (of Sweden, Norway, and Scania) and Queen Blanche, listing numerous reliquaries and other treasures to be given to the future Vadstena Abbey in 1346. Behind the generous promises was the plan for their own aforementioned funeral choir in the abbey church. The abbey was built on the premises donated by King Magnus, Queen Blanche and their son, King Haakon VI, but the will was never carried out, as King Magnus died in exile.[1159] The will remains, however, a valuable source as it lists church treasures whose

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[1155] *Heimskringla*: Harald Hardrådes saga, ch. 82.

[1156] Molland, 53; *Sverres saga*, kap. 83.

[1157] *Heimskringla*: Magnussönernas historia, ch. 11. See also ch. 32, in which the King builds a wooden church for the relic and many other relics, with a tablet or frontal of enameled silver and copper with gems commissioned in Greece, and a casket he had received from King Erik Emune.

[1158] *Sverres saga*, Kap. 60. See also *Sagan om Magnus den Gode*, ch. 27, in which an oat of loyalty to Magnus the Good is sworn on a reliquary casket.

[1159] Fritz 2003, 289–295.

existence would otherwise have been forgotten. Most of the precious items and nearly all the reliquaries were intended for the high altar, in front of the royal couple's tomb. The only exception was the king's own cross-shaped reliquary with a fragment of the True Cross, which would have been donated to the altar of the Holy Cross. The king and the queen probably selected items which had particular meanings for them. In the will, attention was thus paid to describing both relics and reliquaries in some detail.[1160] As the historian Birgitta Fritz has pointed out, this detail indicates that all or most of the items mentioned already existed elsewhere in the kingdom.[1161] That means the same items may appear in other Nordic, mainly Swedish, church inventories, but the descriptions are hardly accurate enough to distinguish them, as similar types of reliquaries were common. Vadstena abbey continued to receive donations from several generations of Swedish kings and queens, for whom it was the chosen burial and memorial site. The abbey is known to have possessed a rich collection of relics and reliquaries, many of them also originating in the abbey itself.

Queen Margaret (1353–1412), who reigned over the Nordic countries, also donated precious reliquaries to the churches she had personal contact with. In return, she expected a minimum of loyalty and prayers. In 1376, she donated a monstrance to Lund Cathedral, which has been interpreted as an attempt to secure ecclesiastic and heavenly support for her young son Olaf, who was going to be crowned king later that same year. When she donated a reliquary plate or tablet to the Cistercian Abbey at Ås, it was accompanied with the request for requiem masses to be held for her parents and

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[1160] SDHK 5307: " (--) *tu. huwuþ af ællyuu þusand iumfru lagþ. i tu træhuwuþ med kronum,* (--) *et skrin af cristallo med helghudomum,* (--) *þry gams ægg med helghudomum, Jtem et kar af kristallo med dyrom stenom i. hwilicu kari ær spinea corona. oc andre helghu doma af varom herra.,* (--)"

[1161] Fritz 1992, 119; see also Fritz 2003, 289–295. -Grethe Authén Blom has suggested that the items did not yet exist, except for the cross the king and queen refer to as their own. She compares their will to King Haakon V's will of circa 1319, claiming that all the items mentioned in it were already existing and King Haakon's own. see Authén Blom 1985, 130–138. In fact, Haakon V's will included items that did not exist yet, which he mandated to be commissioned afterwards, but indeed, no items with an unclear background.

relatives.[1162] When in 1406, Queen Margaret's adopted son, King Eric of Pomerania, married Philippa, the daughter of King Henry IV of England, the latter gave costly relics and reliquaries as presents to the people involved in the wedding arrangements. Bishop Peder Lykke's efforts in the process were rewarded with a large silver image of St Sigfrid, full of relics of various saints; while Queen Margaret received a gold and crystal reliquary with a fragment of Christ's tunic from King Henry. According to the king's records, the reliquary was custom-made by refashioning it from another object in the royal treasury. Queen Margaret herself donated a small golden reliquary crucifix with a relic of the True Cross to Lund Cathedral, where they were wed.[1163]

King Eric and Queen Philippa had the same fascination with relics and reliquaries as their parents. In 1423–1425, the king made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Venice, and they made donations to Vadstena Abbey of relics and reliquaries among other treasures. In 1422, the King had a relic of St Knud's arm enshrined in a gilt silver reliquary, and Queen Filippa personally brought it to Vadstena.[1164] The royal couple also appealed to the pope, on behalf of the abbey, to officially allow the confessor at Vadstena to receive and exhibit holy relics.[1165] In a letter to Cardinal Antonius and in another letter to the pope in 1419, Philippa eventually met with success in her demands, when she sent them some relics of St Birgitta.[1166] Already in 1415, on a pilgrimage to Vadstena, the queen had become a *soror ab extra* and was given the honour of lifting St Birgitta's bones from the reliquary during a celebration,[1167] and she was also buried there in 1430. Relics were involved in other royal visits to Vadstena, too: In 1448, King Karl was received in Vadstena Abbey, in front of St Birgitta's Shrine, by

[1162] SDHK 10893; SDHK 11078; DD 4:1, 284. The Queen also had close ties with the Vadstena convent; see Etting 1997, 251–254. See also Andersson 1997, 240–241; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 36; 105; Liepe 2015a, 89.
[1163] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89–93; Stratford 2012, 118–121.
[1164] DV 22.3.1422.
[1165] SDHK 19199
[1166] SDHK 19251; SDHK 19319; Pope Martin V's acceptance letter in the same year, SDHK 19393.
[1167] DV 238. On Queen Filippa and Vadstena, see also Åkestam 2015, 49–50.

monks holding relics in their hands. His spouse, Queen Catherine, was received in the same manner on her visit to Vadstena in 1450, and the following year she was buried there. In 1458, King Christian I was, in turn, solemnly received with relics at Vadstena.[1168]

Kings and queens liked to have private relics on their person too, and for this purpose they had reliquaries specifically made for them. Pendants, brooches, or rings allowed the relics to be worn close to the skin, while small devotional tablets or panels could be taken along on journeys or contemplated at home. King Karl Knutsson had several reliquaries for his private use, and he wished to keep some of them in the family. In his will in 1470, he declared that his largest reliquary would be given to Vadstena Abbey, but that his son and wife should have one each. His newly wed third wife was going to have a monstrance or some kind of tablet where the relic was visible through a glass, which the king used in his daily religious routine.[1169] His son, Karl Karlsson, would inherit the reliquary pendant the king used to wear round his neck every day.[1170] This reference to everyday wear underlines the tactile and continuous presence of the relic in his life.

For the Swedish regent, Sten Sture the Elder, relics and saints were part of his political propaganda. After his victory at the Battle of Brunkeberg (1471), he wanted to express his gratitude to the saints he felt had helped him: St Gereon, on whose day the battle had taken place, and St George, his patron saint. He thus organised a procession on St Gereon's Day to celebrate his victory with all the relics from the churches of Stockholm carried by all the priests to the ridge of Brunkeberg.[1171] A material token of his gratitude was going to be a new altar and a large statue dedicated to St George in Storkyrkan in Stockholm. In order to fulfil his plan, he had to write several times to the pope asking for relics and prebend rights for the altar of St George to be built. In 1492 and 1493, Hemming Gadh also wrote to the pope on Sture's behalf, asking for a licence to purchase the relics of St

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[1168] DV 593; DV 686.

[1169] "*wårt dageliga mässerede med them lilla tafla, ther helgedoma äre uti och glas före*", DF 3419. 'Mässerede' has been interpreted as a general term for the utensils needed for celebrating the mass, like the king may have purchased for his private chapel.

[1170] "*wårt helgedoma kar, som wi pläga dageliga hafwa på wår hals*", DF 3419.

[1171] Svanberg & Qvarnström 1998, 45–48.

Gereon, St George, the 11,000 Virgins, St Birgitta, St Cosmas and St Damian.[1172] Their pleas were finally answered, and the impressive sculpture of St George fighting the dragon, traditionally attributed to the sculptor Bernt Notke, was commissioned by Sten Sture and his wife Ingeborg Tott. It was an unusually expensive purchase for the period, of over 4000 silver marks. It was finally consecrated on the New Year's Eve in 1489, by the papal legate Antonius Mast, who brought (at least) four small relic packages and placed them in the in the relic niches of a pendant on the St George sculpture's chest. Each relic package had an *authentica* attached confirming their identity, but apparently it was not always easy to get the relics one desired. There were relics of St Blasius, St Germanus, St Cyriakus, St Leo, St Martin, St Donatus, and the 10,000 Knights, but of the saints requested, only St George's were granted. Together with the relics, Mast inserted a written document stating that the donors, Sten Sture and Lady Ingeborg, had built the sculpture "for their salvation".[1173]

Sten Sture the Elder is also described as being present at other relic festivities. During St Katarina's translation in Vadstena in August 1489, only five months prior to the consecration of his commissioned sculpture of St George, he is described as a humble devotee in front of the holy relics. He declared that he did not deserve the honour of carrying the saint's head in the procession, and yet he nevertheless did and partook in several other central acts of the ceremony.[1174] With other members of the nobility, he had already commissioned an embroidered cover for St Katarina's previous tomb a decade earlier.[1175]

Relics were present in Sten Sture the Younger's life, too. According to the rhymed chronicle, *Sturekrönikan*, he participated in St Ingrid's translation festivities in Skänninge Abbey in 1507. The saint's bones were placed in a new casket and carried around the

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[1172] Carlsson 1915, 51–52.

[1173] Collijn 1919, 21–42; Svanberg 1998, 45–48; Tångeberg 2009b; Svanberg 2013, 323–329. Tångeberg argues, based mainly on the colors used, that Notke is unlikely to be the sculptor of this St George and that it was made in Antwerp. Svanberg, however, states that contemporaneous written sources as well as material details in the sculpture group prove it was made by Notke in Stockholm.

[1174] *Stora kyrkofesten*, 49–53. Inviting rulers to carry relics in processions was common in Europe; see e.g. Herrmann-Mascard 1975, 206–207.

[1175] Franzén 1963, 191–212.

churchyard, and a feast ensued with generous amounts of food and drink for all – rich and commoner alike.[1176] Hemming Gadh's plan for Blessed Hemming's translation in Turku, 1514, also allowed the regent to be closest to the reliquary and even carry it during the ceremony. Indeed, his coat of arms (together with those of his board members and the archbishop) were to be emblazoned on large banners and hung around the cathedral together with Blessed Hemming's coat of arms.[1177] Like his elder namesake, Sten Sture the Younger was also a commissioner of ecclesiastic art. With his wife, Kristina Gyllenstierna, he donated a large altarpiece to Västerås Cathedral in 1516, with relic niches in the predella and two reliquaries depicted in the painted panels (discussed above in the section on shrines).

In Central and Southern Europe, royal courts had their own collections of relics and reliquaries. The collections of the Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV in Prague, King Louis IX in Paris, and King Philip II at the Escorial Monastery were among the most famous. Further north, in the church of his castle in Wittenberg, prince-elector Frederick the Wise also had a remarkable collection that could be admired twice every year.[1178] Queen Christina of Denmark and Norway, the spouse of King John of Denmark, was one of the Nordic collectors of relics. In 1505, she was granted a special licence by the pope to accept relics from any church or abbey if the owners wanted to give them to her. Apparently she laid out her specific wishes in a letter to the pope, perhaps hoping for more concrete help from him, as the pope's response refers to her wish to acquire relics of the True Cross, St George, St Francis, St Catherine, the 10,000 Knights, and the 11,000 Virgins. One of the prerequisites for being granted her wishes was that she must keep and transport them in proper reliquaries of silver or gilt silver.[1179] King Christian I of Denmark also had a small collection of relics, including a large

[1176] *Sturekrönikan*/Klemming 1867–1868, 194–195.
[1177] FMU 5715.
[1178] Lazure 2007, 58–93.
[1179] DN 6:639. *(--) ac cum reuerentia, et honore consuetis, illas ad deo dicata et alia honesta loca portare, transmittere: et transferre, ac custodire: et penes te: et custodiri in capsis etiam argenteis, ac deauratis et alibi honeste tamen recondere, et recondi procurare (--)*

part of the True Cross and the jaw of St Anne, which he kept in the royal chapel at Kalundborg Castle.[1180] These reliquaries are not documented, but as Christian sought indulgences for the people visiting them, they must have been duly prepared for display. His spouse, Queen Dorothea, also seems to have been eager to acquire relics and use their power. The relic collection in Lund Cathedral included a surplice that was believed to have been worn by a female saint, either St Margaret or St Ragnhild, and the queen apparently borrowed it in 1468, to help her in childbirth.[1181] She donated a relic of the True Cross in an ostensory reliquary to the cathedral, probably after her pilgrimage to Rome in 1488.[1182] To her private chapel in Roskilde Cathedral, she brought two of the 11,000 Virgins' heads.[1183]

Relics and reliquaries, being among the most valuable and prestigious items of the era, played a political role as gifts between the powerful. As seen above in the section on crystal monstrances, Nordic rulers received several relics from the Crown of Thorns in precious reliquaries from the French monarchs, who were in possession of that famous relic of the Passion. King Haakon V (of Norway), who was one recipient of such a relic, was also one of the most remarkable donors of relics and reliquaries to Norwegian churches. This is partially explained by his project to establish fourteen churches as royal chapels with special privileges, and is thought to have been an attempt at promoting himself as a Christian king – following the example of St Louis (Louis IX of France).[1184] Haakon V paid special attention to the two churches housing the Crown of Thorns relics: St Mary's Church in Oslo and the Church of the Apostles in Bergen. He commissioned similar large silver reliquary plates or tablets for both churches, among other reliquary

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[1180] *Quia dominus rex in castro Kaligenburg reliquias tenet pro ornamento regni Dacie preciosas. petit indulgencies pro visitantibus eas. Vtpote magna pars ligni sancte crucis. De sanguine fuso ex calice. mentum sancte Anne et alia plurima. Regina autem supplicat vestre Sanctitati pro vna bona particula*
*tunice domini inconsutilis.* DN 17:1241.
[1181] *SRD* VIII, 446–456.
[1182] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89–90.
[1183] Gad 1980, 371–372.
[1184] Johnsen 1965, 153–154; Liepe 2015a, 81–84.

gifts.[1185] After receiving the Crown of Thorns relic from the French king in 1304, he donated part of it to Bishop Brynolf of Skara Cathedral that same year. The importance of receiving this gift is reflected in the officium *De Spinea Corona*, written on the anniversary of its receipt, 2 September.[1186] King Haakon's will also sheds light on the different stages of ownership in these treasures. Like Queen Dorothea, King Haakon had donated several reliquaries and other valuable items to churches – in this case, St Michael's in Tønsberg and St Olaf's in Åvaldsnes – and yet they remained his property. Only upon his death would the items then belong to the churches themselves.[1187]

King Birger Magnusson also transferred various treasures from the royal castle to Uppsala Cathedral in 1311. The transfer indicates that, though royal palaces could host large treasures including relics, they were not always the most suitable or safest place for them. There were several turbulent periods in King Birger's life; thus he wrote to Uppsala Cathedral Chapter, explaining that he himself could not provide these relics with sufficient reverence, due to his various duties and frequent travels. The objects he wished to leave in the chapter's care were not all relics, but he lumped them together as such. In addition to the relic of an angel holding a thorn, there were four different crosses, four different pyxes, and a selection of royal regalia and clothes.[1188] It is not known if or when the objects were returned to the monarchy, but it seems that at least the thorn reliquary was, as Birger's successor, Magnus Eriksson, mentions it in his will in 1346.[1189]

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[1185] *Legamus eciam ecclesie duodecim Apostolorum Bergis, capelle regie lxxta marchas puri argenti, ad tabulam pro reliquiis faciendam, ad modum tabule reliquiarum, que in ecclesia beate Marie virginis in Osloya, et pro duabus manibus faciendis, ad reliquias in eisdem reponendas, et duos textus argenteos cum reliquiis in eisdem existentibus, quos in capella nostra habere consuevimus*. DN 4:128; see also Liepe 2015a, 76; 86–87. –I argue about the king's role as the commissioner of both tablets above in the *tabula* chapter.

[1186] For more on the different theories on the background and practice of the donation, see Ekre 2004, 45–68. See also Lundén 1983, 74–75; Schuck 1918, 28–29; Björkvall & Jacobsson 2008, 21–46; Liepe 2015a, 78–80..

[1187] DN 4:128.

[1188] SDHK 2435.

[1189] SDHK 5307; Ekre 2004, 51.

The cult of relics influenced all levels of medieval Nordic society. Their divine *virtus* sanctified churches and altars, provided healing and protection to individuals and communities, validated oaths, and inspired spiritual visions. This perceived power made them economically and politically significant as means of diplomacy, objects of sale and theft, and agents for collecting donations for the church. Clerics and rulers promoted, maintained and controlled the cults, but one of the persons shaping the Nordic cults of relics was St Birgitta, who envisioned devoted attitudes to relics and modelled them in her own life. Her own relics were later venerated throughout Europe, and her shrine in Vadstena became one of the main pilgrimage destinations in Scandinavia.

## 10 – The Life of a Reliquary

The social life of a reliquary, in the sense of its contact with living people, has various stages: its commission, manufacture, acquisition, and use. There are also the ritual moments of its display, veneration, and storage; and the material transformations caused by damages, improvements, repairs, or destruction. This chapter examines those moments, beginning with an analysis of the place of reliquaries in Nordic churches and lay encounters with reliquaries, either in processions or *in situ*.

### Reliquaries in Motion

The shrine of a saint might itself be an inanimate object, but it had the power to move hundreds and thousands of people, whether it be a pilgrimage or a short walk to a nearby church. During processions, the reliquaries were mobile, too, and the sacred presence of saints was brought to different parts of the church, the churchyard outside, and and sometimes the streets or fields beyond. These events fortified the status of the church as an institution and connected it to visitors from all social classes[1190]. Processions with reliquaries happened during the *Festum reliquiarum* and several other occasions in the liturgical year. In

[1190] Liepe 2015a, 90–94.

the Birgittine order, in fact, all processions involved carrying reliquaries and singing the hymn *Preciosi sunt sancti*.[1191]

In the Church of Our Lady of Copenhagen, such celebrations involving reliquaries were organised at least eight times every year. In some of them, reliquaries must have been carried in procession, but an alternative practice was to arrange them thematically – or according to the type or rank of relics they represented – for display on various altars, tables, and shelves in the church, so that the pilgrims could be led past them to admire and venerate them in a certain, predefined order. This was common at least in Central Europe, but possibly also in the North.[1192] The reliquaries displayed on those feast days are lost, but their number, characteristics and the order of display is known from three medieval lists of reliquaries (one from Lund and two from the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen), written to make sure the clerics were able to identify each reliquary and present them in the correct order.

Whether the reliquary lists from Lund and Copenhagen were written as instructions for procession or arranged display is not explicit in the documents, but they have been interpreted in both ways. In the Copenhagen lists from the early sixteenth century, the reliquaries are divided into two sections: "to the right" and "to the left", which has been understood as a guide to where they should be on the altar of St Mary Magdalene during the feast of relics.[1193] The large amount of reliquaries makes it difficult to imagine them all fitting on top of one altar, so perhaps they were placed on shelves around it arranged for that purpose. It has also been suggested that relics were presented from a high lectern to make them easier to see [1194], but it could even be the order for carrying them in procession.[1195]

When the list is written particularly large letters, like in the case of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, it may be assumed that it was to facilitate the reading aloud of it to the crowd; like this, the list

[1191] Schleif 2013, 251; Schier 2013, 281.
[1192] Devisse 2002 (1979), 50–51; Jexlev 1976, 29–30; SRD VIII, 260–456.
[1193] DK: Vor Frue Kirke, København, 35–37.
[1194] Källström 2011, 163–164.
[1195] Jexlev 1976, 29.

would gradually became very familiar to the listeners that heard it several times per year. According to the art historian Jennifer P. Kingsley, the clerics writing and reading out the relic lists had the power to mould the memory and narrative of the treasury and thus the community.

> "The record of the treasury […] thus employs a cognitive structure that, because it is reused, continuously performed and linked to sacred objects, has the potential to establish a community's self-image and fix a form of memory that is inherently disorganised and unstable."[1196]

How intentionally that power was used is not always easy to gauge from the sources, as there often seems to be a degree of randomness or a logic based on reasons unknown to us. The two lists of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen were analysed in 1976 by art historian Thelma Jexlev. One of the lists describes only the reliquaries, the other also their contents. Jexlev observed that the order of relics within one reliquary was decided according to the hierarchy of value in the Litany of Saints, but only to a certain extent; afterwards, the order seems random. Even relics related to the same saint in the same reliquary are not listed together. Many reliquaries are not attributed to any specific saint; they are just described as reliquaries of a certain shape and material, and sometimes defined as new or old. Around the year 1515, the church had over 200 relics in 42 different reliquaries.[1197] Those numbers already set a frame for the duration of the ceremony, if the name of every relic and reliquary was indeed spoken aloud.

Over fifty reliquaries of various materials, shape and size, and containing hundreds of relics pertaining to 417 different saints, are described in the Lund list, *Ordo in ostensione sanctarum reliquiarum in ecclesia Lundensi* (Order of Ostension for the Holy Relics in Lund Cathedral), written around the year 1470. Some reliquaries were described as containing only one relic, while others had as many as forty fragments of saints, often listed in hierarchical order with relics

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[1196] Kingsley 2011, 30. See also Hahn 2005b, 1–20.

[1197] Jexlev 1976, 26–47; DK, Vor Frue kirke, København, 37–38; Grinder-Hansen 2002, 110; Liebgott 1982, 101–131; SRD VIII, 260–268.

relating to Christ at the top. Some reliquaries are described in terms of material and shape; others are accredited to their donors (clergymen, royalty and nobility), too.[1198] In this way, also the memory of the donors was consolidated by repetition. Only fifteenth-century donors are mentioned, which may be because several older reliquaries were probably lost in raids and fires, but also because the memory of the donors of older reliquaries may have faded even if the reliquaries themselves remained.

Typical reliquary lists are written in a rather obscure style, often describing reliquaries in so few words that it is difficult to visualise the items without having seen them. As Kingsley has pointed out, the descriptions in this kind of documents focused on the elements considered essential, the features that were perhaps enough for the community to recognise the items, based on their own memory of them. In other words, these lists were written for people who knew the objects relatively well; it was enough to recognise them "within a single corpus". The repetitive style of the lists served the purpose of helping clerics, but perhaps also for laypeople to memorise their contents when the lists were recited during festivities.[1199] In the reliquary lists from the Franciscan abbeys of Copenhagen and Roskilde, the purpose of displaying the objects or reciting the lists is not explicit, and the custodians have spent even less words for describing the reliquaries; only the relics were listed with precision, and the solution for recognising the reliquaries was to mark them with letters from 'A' to 'Y'.[1200] A letter-based system may have been attempted in other churches as well; in the list of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, for instance, three reliquaries were marked with a letter. However, this mnemonic aspect is not always replicated over time, and the descriptions of items were not copied identically from one list to the next. Kingsley's description of three medieval lists from Bamberg Cathedral sounds very familiar: the lists from three different centuries describe the items in such divergent terms that it remains

[1198] SRD VIII, 446–456. The list was edited and studied by Sven Hylander in 1820 and more recently by Göran Axel-Nilsson in 1989.
[1199] Kingsley 2011, 24; Jexlev 1976, 40.
[1200] SRD VIII, 267–312.

unclear whether they are describing the same things.[1201] Then again, the lists often complement each other – from the different details mentioned in two separate documents, an entire object begins to take shape. This is also the case with some of the reliquaries listed in the Franciscan abbeys of Roskilde and Copenhagen and of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, where the items are listed twice.

Not all reliquaries were used equally in all ceremonies, however. In the *Ordo in ostensione* from Lund, the processional use of certain reliquaries on particular feast days is separately mentioned: the copper shrine of St Marinus and two other large copper caskets with various different relics were carried around town in the processions of the rogation days, whereas a large wooden casket, which contained the head of one of the 11,000 Virgins and several other relics of different saints, used to be carried in a procession accompanied with prayers for rain in times of drought.[1202]

In Uppsala, carrying relics of St Eric was part of many festivities. Once on St Lawrence's day – the patron saint of the old cathedral – the reliquary shrine of St Eric was carried around the church. A poor, blind woman was praying to God and the martyrs by the church door, and when the shrine was carried past her, she suddenly regained her sight.[1203] During the three days before Ascension, St Eric's reliquary was traditionally carried from the old cathedral in Uppsala to the site of the new cathedral in Östra Aros (the present Uppsala Cathedral). When it passed the Franciscan monastery, a sick monk was healed by the relics passing by behind his window, only hearing the singing of the clerics carrying the shrine.[1204] The processions in Uppsala were still so frequent in 1527, at the onset of the Rerformation, that a new bier had to be made for the shrine.[1205]

The translation of a saint was a rarer occasion, but they were nonetheless important events for the local community. The date was fixed in the liturgical calendar and celebrated in the years to follow. Processions were an essential part of the translation of the recently

[1201] Kingsley 2011, 29–30.
[1202] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 101–104; 117–118.
[1203] Lundén 1945, 60.
[1204] Lundén 1945, 52–53.
[1205] Bengtsson 2010, 140.

deceased saint's remains, and miracles were witnessed during those passages, as mentioned above with St Birgitta.[1206] Still greater festivities accompanied the translations of relics from their original tomb to new, precious reliquaries. Those often took place after the saint's new status had been acknowledged by the pope, and they were arranged with the greatest pomp and ceremony, providing a feast for all the senses: sparkling displays of church treasure, candles, decorations, and fireworks; the church echoing with music, prayers and sermons; and the heady smell of incense burning throughout the ceremonies – which was probably also a precaution when exhuming a body. The elevation of the relics of the Swedish Saint Botvid was performed by two bishops – when they went to exhume the coffin, they brought crosses, candles, and a censer that spread the scent of thyme.[1207] The sense of taste was not forgotten either: in accounts of the translations of Nils Hermansson of Linköping, Hemming of Turku, Katarina of Vadstena and Ingrid of Skänninge, there are many mentions of the generous amounts of food and drink supplied.[1208]

The translation of St Katarina of Vadstena is the best documented of the Nordic medieval translation ceremonies, as it is described by two eyewitnesses. The event took place on 1 August, 1489, in the presence of the regent, Sten Sture, several bishops, representatives of the nobility, clerics, monks and nuns of the abbey, and a jubilant crowd of laypeople. The church was decorated with candles, lavish textiles and images of St Katarina, and the space had been carefully arranged in order to allow large crowds to move about safely. Musical instruments and choirs rang out, and in addition to the reliquaries, a new image of the saint was unveiled – it had been commissioned from Central Europe just in time for the translation. A procession of the regent and highest clergy walked to the tomb of the saint, kneeled and opened it, while accompanied by chanting and incense. The bones were lifted up and placed in their new reliquaries; the regent, the archbishop and some other most privileged people kissed the skull before it was placed in its reliquary. They were able to feel the lovely

[1206] Krötzl 2015, 54; SRS I:1, 278; *Passio et miracula Sancti Olavi*, 91.
[1207] Trotzig 1987, 59.
[1208] Källström 2011, 98–99; DF 5715; *Sturekrönika* 194–195.

scent from the relics. The mandible was placed in a crystal monstrance, and one elbow was placed in an arm of gilt silver. The remaining bones were placed in a red casket and then in a larger full-body casket that had originally been made for St Birgitta's relics. In procession, the relics were carried to the main altar, around the church and through the churchyard, accompanied by the head and another relic of St Birgitta in their own reliquaries. The procession was witnessed by hundreds of people in the church and churchyard, from its fences and even from the rooftops of nearby buildings. Pilgrims were rewarded by indulgences and possibly picking up a contact relic – they could take a drop of the blessed water that the archbishop had used to wash the saint's bones.[1209]

The translation of Blessed Hemming took place in Turku in July 1514. There is no eyewitness account of it, but instead there remains a detailed plan, from Electus Hemming Gadh, who had previously participated in the preparations for St Catherine's translation and also seen similar festivities in Rome, referring as he does to the canonisation ceremonies of St Bonaventure and St Leopold, which had taken place in 1484 and 1485 respectively. Gadh's plan even included a description of the ideal design for the reliquary of St Hemming: it should be a wooden, gold-painted casket.[1210] He had planned the celebrations to be breathtaking; including fireworks, birds flying inside the church, music, incense, and colourful flowers floating in the air. Sten Sture and other guests of honour would carry the casket in a procession and finally place it on an altar, where other visitors could kiss it and bring their gifts to the saint.[1211] There is no record of how

[1209] DV 271–273; *Den stora kyrkofesten för Sankta Katarina i Vadstena*, 45–55. -For more on laypeople, indulgences and donations to the St Mary's Church in Oslo, see Liepe 2015a, 93, and as quoted by Liepe, Hege Roaldset 1996, 84–93. On kissing and smelling in the context of the cult of St Katarina of Vadstena, see e.g. *Processus seu negocium canonizacionis b. Katerine de Vadstenis*, 1942–1946, 72–73; *Den stora kyrkofesten*…., 46–47.

[1210] For more on this, see the *Hemming* section above. Similar documents were probably written about St Henrik's translation 200 years earlier, but these have been lost. Hemming was less well-known than Henrik, but his cult developed during the 15th century, when the cult of saints was already more established than in the late 13th and early 14th centuries, when Turku Cathedral was still new as a cult centre.

[1211] DF 5715; Porthan 1859, 285; DF 5716B; DF 5725; Klockars 1960, 18–23.

the plan was put into practice, but some version of it did happen. The Swedish chronicler, Olaus Petri, reports that Archbishop Jacob of Uppsala, Bishop Mats of Strängnäs, and others "went to Turku and dug up the bones of Saint Hemming".[1212] On their way back, it seems the bishops arranged a translation of Hemming's smaller relics at St Nicholas' Church (*Storkyrkan*) in Stockholm. According to *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker*, the festivities took place on July 12, 1514 and involved the city's clergy and monks carrying crosses and banners in a procession to the church, where a mass was held.[1213]

Roughly one hundred years before the translation of Blessed Bishop Nils Hermansson in Linköping, according to the bishop's canonisation documents, a vision of his translation came in a dream to Kristina Finvidsdotter, a nun of Vadstena. In the dream, Bishop Nils was being led by two alb-wearing knights in front of a procession of clerics carrying candles and reliquaries. The explanation came within the dream: the bishop would receive eternal glory in a month's time; and according to the document, this prediction of his death was correct.[1214] Rather than adding to our knowledge about the cult of St Nils, the account is instructive of a Vadstena nun's knowledge of customs related to sainthood; the dream would reflect her experiences of participating in Birgittine processions with relics and candles in the abbey and listening to sermons about the miracles of the saints and the soul's translation into eternity.

The tactile dimension is often mentioned – and nowadays even emphasised – in discussions about the medieval religious experience and perception of cult objects such as images or reliquaries. However, from the point of view of canon law, touching relics with bare hands was forbidden.[1215] As we have seen, most relics are wrapped and sewn in textiles even if also protected within a reliquary. St Birgitta felt that reliquaries protected the relics from human touch, but as Martina Bagnoli has pointed out, even the reliquaries were preferably only

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[1212] Olavus Petri 1917, 272.

[1213] The relic was specified first as a bone of his left arm, then the note was corrected to indicate a bone from his back. *Stockholms stads tänkeböcker*, 370. -For more on Nordic processions and banners, see Liepe 1998, 261–276.

[1214] Lundén 1963, 65–67.

[1215] Herrmann-Mascard 1975, 201–203; Sigal 1985, 35–40.

touched through a cloth – separating the human from the divine.[1216] Nordic sources do not mention this directly, but it is reflected in a panel in the Västerås altarpiece, in which a cleric is holding a reliquary with a cloth between the object and his bare hands.

Judging from the miracle accounts, there was nevertheless a degree of tactile experience even for the laypeople despite these restrictions, and worn-out patches in Nordic reliquaries indicate that they were often touched. The contact with reliquaries was controlled and mediated by clergy. Instead of hands, it was more acceptable for the pilgrims to touch the reliquaries with their mouths and foreheads.[1217] If the reliquary was sitting still on an altar or on a high pedestal behind it, the visitors may have approached it with different acts as described in miracle collections and translation accounts: praying, bowing, making the sign of the cross, bringing votives, kneeling, admiring the reliquary with their eyes; perhaps fervently yet respectfully kissing it. In the case of a reliquary shrine or a tomb, depending on how these devotional needs had been taken into account in its construction, the visitors may have been able to insert their hand inside it, lie in front of it, or crawl under it. They may have even practised *incubatio* – sleeping or spending several days in front of the saint's tomb until they were healed.[1218]

Although most Nordic miracle stories describe miracles occurring at a distance and pilgrimages being made *after* being healed, the collections do also include cases of healing through touching or being in the physical presence of relics or reliquaries. In Nidaros, a paralysed man was accidentally knocked to the ground and fell under the casket of St Olaf's bones, after which he got up and was miraculously able to walk.[1219] In Skara, a sick child regained her health as soon as she was placed on top of the tomb of St Brynolf,[1220] and in Vadstena, a man who suffered cramps in his left hand was cured after

[1216] Dyas 2014, 1–7; Bagnoli 2014, 100–109.
[1217] Bagnoli 2014, 103.
[1218] Krötzl 2015, 52; Sigal 1985, 135–144.
[1219] *Passio et miracula Beati Olavi*, 106.
[1220] Krötzl 2015, 60; SRS III:2, 171.

touching the stone surface of St Katarina's tomb.[1221] In another miracle of St Katarina of Vadstena, a paralysed ten year-old girl – suitably named Birgitta – was brought to the tomb of the saint and was cured after contact with the relics;[1222] this is one of the few stories where there seems to have been an actual contact with the relics, not only the reliquary. More typically, it seems to me, when the saintly body is mentioned in a healing miracle story, what the pilgrim actually encounters is the shrine or casket. Thus the word "corpus"[1223] is even used to denote a reliquary, just like we have seen in chapters 7 and 8 how the words *caput* and *brachium* were given the meaning of head or hand reliquaries.

In most of the above cases, the reliquary is mainly a passive, unmoving object of devotion, even if the visitor's experience may resemble a dialogue with it. The presence is felt, and responses to prayers are heard. The touching can be perceived as mutual: as Thiofrid of Echternach writes, "[w]ho with fast faith touches the outside of the container whether in gold, silver, gems, or fabric, bronze, marble, or wood, he will be touched by that which is concealed inside."[1224] In particular situations, however, the reliquary takes on a more active role and – with the help of clergy – performs gestures and movements. In some situations, the lids of shrines or wings of an aumbry or altarpiece may be opened. Active reliquaries may move not only past, but towards the visitor, reach out and touch

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[1221] "*Tandem veniens ad sepulcrum beate Katerine, vbi illustratus quodam lumine supernaturali, loquebatur in anima dicens: "Numquid tu sicut plures hic habebis remdium" et posuit manum suam contractam girando eam huc atque illuc super lapidem sepulcri beate Katerine. Quofacto statim et incontinentj, vt dixit prefatus Laurencius, sensit, quod digiti suj contracti absque lapidorum omni dolore ad statum pristinum redierunt, et pro recuperata sanitate obtulit vnam manum ceream ad sepulcrum beate Katerine in signum miraculi secum facti*." Processus..., 100.

[1222] "*sed voto per eum ad beatam Katerinam facto et circa eius sepulcrum completo statim cum beate Katerine reliquie superposite fuerunt capiti suo, conualuit et intra triduum perfectam sanitatem recuperauit*." Processus seu negocium canonizacionis B. Katerine de Vadstenis, 1942–46, 197.

[1223] See e.g. Metcalfe 1881, 91: *Passio Olavi*, where a sinner is converted after seeing Olav's glorious body carried in procession (*corpus gloriosum in processione extra ecclesiam portaretur*) – I do not believe the body would have been carried without shrine, or even that the shrine would be open during the procession.

[1224] Quoted in Hahn 2012, 24.

the devotee. Arm reliquaries – particularly ones representing the arms of holy bishops – were used by living bishops to perform the blessing. A reliquary cross could be used in the same way. Even a head-shaped reliquary was reported to have been involved in human interaction. In Xanten, Germany, a reliquary head was lifted up so it could thank generous donors by kissing them – with the assistance of a cleric, surely, but still it must have been quite an intense experience. These practices were most likely adopted in Nordic churches as well, although they are not recorded in any of the remaining Nordic documents.

Two Nordic anecdotes, mentioned earlier in the chapter on head reliquaries, can be interpreted as expressions of similar interactive experiences with reliquaries. In both cases, the reliquaries respond and confirm a human religious act. Both are post-medieval and bear signs of having been gradually corrupted through being told and retold over time, but the core is still discernible from the eyewitness account, probably told in the 16th century. In an eighteenth-century anecdote from Roskilde Cathedral, "during the Catholic times" (i.e., the Middle Ages), two wooden heads were nailed onto the main altar and their function was to nod when people were absolved of their sins – and someone would make this happen by moving the heads with an attached metal wire. The wooden heads kept on the main altar were certainly reliquary busts, but to nail them onto the holy altar would not have been acceptable, so at least that part of the story must be the result of misunderstanding or fiction.

At their most active, reliquaries didn't even seem to need human help to interact. Thirteen heads of the 11,000 Virgins were the treasure of Esrum Cistercian Abbey in Denmark; and after matins one Christmas Eve, the monks were in the church singing *Te Deum Laudamus*, when the heads on the main altar began to sing in response.[1225] Like the nodding heads in Roskilde, this anecdote may

[1225] "*eo si M. S. veteri Carthusiano Coloniensi fides sit tribuenda, tredecim Parthenicae sodalitatis huius caluariae sunt translatae, quae cum decenter ornatae fuissent aris impositae, nocte Natalis Dominici (sic), dum Matutinis absolutis hymni Ambrosiani primus versus, praecinente Praefecto Monasterij cantatus esset a Religiosis: alterum* Te aeternum patrem*, tredecim capita suavissimo caelestique concentu cecinerunt.*" Crombach 1647, 668; Montgomery 2010, 29, quotes a French book repeating the same story in 1656.

simply reflect the prejudiced seventeenth-century view of the medieval cult of relics, or be based on a medieval miracle story. The sensitivity to this kind of interaction was essential in the medieval religious experience. It was not uncommon to witness speaking, moving, crying or bleeding reliquaries or images of saints in the church.

**Altars, Aumbries and Sacristies**

Most reliquaries had their permanent places in churches – but where were they exactly when they were not carried in processions? Which ones were on the main altar, and which ones in side chapels or wall niches? How easily could they be seen and experienced by the visitors? In the above-mentioned accounts of miracles and interaction, the shrines or tombs would be approachable, in principle, any day in their permanent location, while the encounters with other reliquaries mostly took place during celebrations, when they would have been brought out. Some may have been permanently on display, while others were kept hidden in sacristies and aumbries, to be taken out only on feast days. Practices seem to have varied between churches and time periods.

In the beginning of this thesis, relics inserted inside altars were discussed. Reliquaries, on the other hand, were often referred to as being "on the altar". Reliquaries, like other liturgical objects, often had an administrative link to a specific altar, or to an altar prebend; inventories of those are known from the Cathedrals in Uppsala and Turku. Even those remaining inventories may not tell the whole truth, though: in Uppsala, at least, inventories of prebends seem to mention less images and relics than there probably were.[1226]

Different types of medieval documents indicate that certain reliquaries had their permanent place “on the altar” – often the main altar. King Magnus Eriksson and Queen Blanche bequeathed various reliquaries to the high altar in Vadstena; while in Stavanger, the high altar was the place for the arm reliquary of St Swithun.[1227] Meanwhile, in Roskilde, the head reliquary of St Lucius and the hand of St Mary Magdalene seem to have stood on the high altar

[1226] Dahlbäck 2002a, 258–269; REA 579 (no date); REA 584 (no date).
[1227] SDHK 5307; Haug 2005, 32–39.

side by side.[1228] St Birgitta had a vision concerning the rightful place for the ivory reliquary she had received from Queen Blanche – it belonged on the altar.[1229] In the legend of St Canute, the reliquaries of saints Alban and Oswald are on the altar until they fall off it when the church is attacked.[1230] There was thus a strong bond between reliquaries and altars; not only because altars were consecrated and "sealed" by the relics inside them. During festivities, reliquaries were placed on the altar for display and veneration, often with books and candles, according to specific instructions written in the church ordinals (*libri ordinarii*). The arrangements on different altars varied according to the feast day.[1231] These situations are depicted in medieval paintings and drawings and described in accounts of translations and processions. In the *vita* of St Theodgar, when his relics are taken up for translatio, they are washed and "placed on the altar". When the bishop throws the holy bones to a fire, not believing in their authenticity, the bones leap "back to the altar";[1232] no reliquary is mentioned, although the bones obviously were not placed on the altar as such, but inside a casket.

But where were reliquaries when the documents claim they were "on" the altar? The expression may have implied various different practices. The only surviving medieval depiction of an altar with a reliquary from the Nordic area is the Västerås panel discussed earlier, but medieval images of different altar settings exist from elsewhere, and similar arrangements can thus be imagined in the Nordic churches.[1233] A large full-body casket of a local patron might be permanently placed on a high base or on tall columns behind and above the main altar. This practice is documented in several medieval paintings, and it can still be seen in some medieval churches. In the Nordic countries, no such shrine remains, but they have existed: the most famous one being the shrine of

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[1228] Petersen 1874, 415.

[1229] For an English account of the vision of St Birgitta, see Morris & Searby 2008, 279.

[1230] Jörgensen 1899, 258, 260; Burman Becker 1886, vi–vii; Vellev 1986, 124.

[1231] Guilielmus Durandus 2007, 52–56; Snoek 1995, 209–213; van Tongeren 2009, 270–271.

[1232] *Danske helgeners levned* II, 337–338. The bishop and the king were upset because the translation had apparently been arranged without their presence

[1233] For a fifteenth-century depiction of reliquaries placed behind and above the altar in Sainte-Chapelle, see e.g. Bruna (s.d.), 22–24.

St Olaf in Nidaros. Some smaller caskets had strong loops that allowed them to be suspended from the ceiling: a reliquary made of an elephant tusk once hung below the triumphal crucifix in Lund Cathedral; and an ostrich egg reliquary was placed on top or above it.[1234] Other reliquaries were placed in wall niches or shelves near the altar. Nicolay Nicolaysen has argued that instead on "on", the reliquaries should be understood as being placed "over" the altar.[1235]

The majority of reliquaries, however, were only taken out for festivities and otherwise kept out of sight – in the sacristy or relic cupboards,[1236] but when reliquaries are described as being "on the altar", they should be in immediate contact with it. The rules concerning this were debated throughout the Middle Ages. To begin with, it was considered inappropriate to keep relics on the *mensa*, but from the 9th century at least, the custom of placing them on the altar during mass and festivities seems to have increased.[1237] One document from 1464 reveals that the right to place them on altars was controlled by the authorities: the Copenhagen chapter permitted a cleric to place the Church of Our Lady's relics on the new altar to St Mary Magdalene on seven different feast days, but all the income gained from this by visitors would then belong to the Chapter. It goes on to say that an arrangement with images was made near the altar to display relics during these feasts,[1238] and this sounds like an altarpiece with shelves or relic niches.

A likely place for a reliquary "on the altar" is in an altarpiece or retable, with built-in niches.[1239] The concept of a 'relic altar' (*altare*

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[1234] Källström 2011, 183; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 103.

[1235] Nicolaysen 1890, 146–147.

[1236] See e.g. Hahn 2005b, 2; Hahn 2012, 203; Liepe 2015b, 268; Källström 2011, 181–182.

[1237] Snoek 1995, 214–219; Herrmann-Mascard 1975, 173–174.

[1238] Kjøbenhavns diplomatarium, 84–85: "*(…) cum is locus una cum ymaginibus ante fundationem ipsius altaris in prescriptis festivitatibus fuerat pro repositione reliqviarum specialiter reservatus*." The words "ante fundationem" in medieval documents are usually used in the sense of "before the founding" (of the altar), but theoretically they could also mean "in front of the base of the altar", in which case the "place with images" for relics might be an altar frontal with shelves – an unusual but not impossible solution.

[1239] For more on temporary and permanent retables as arrangements for displaying reliquaries in Dutch ordinals, see van Tongeren 2009, 270–271; 273–274. However, Peter Tångeberg argues that Swedish retables were generally not constructed for storing or displaying relics; see Tångeberg, Peter 2009a, 224–226; 231–232.

*reliquiarum*) also appears in Nordic documents – probably referring to an altar with such a retable. In his will, the thirteenth-century Bishop Henrik of Linköping refers to the *altare reliquiarum* in Linköping Cathedral.[1240] "The altar called the reliquary / relic altar" (*altare quod dicitur Reliquiarum*), is also mentioned in the Cistercian Abbey Church of Esrum in 1374.[1241] Joseph Braun has defined altar graves with relics in the *sepulchrum*, saints' tombs behind the altar, and high shrines behind it as early types of relic altars, while the relic altars of the second half of the Middle Ages were retables.[1242]

Historians Åke Nisbeth, Inger Estham, Bengt Cnattingius and Hanna Källström have discussed the location of the relic altar in Linköping Cathedral. Cnattingius suggests that it may have once been in the eastern choir, in a chapel that resembled Central and Southern European relic chapels, shaped to facilitate the passage of pilgrims. The eastern choir was rebuilt in the 15th century, and a new chapel, dedicated to the Virgin Mary, was built in the same place; a relic of the Virgin Mary was inserted in one of its walls. An indulgence letter from 1412 describes the processions and chants celebrating the relics and their *ostentio* on specific holidays; and it also refers to the Virgin's relics as being "inside the wall of the new choir" (*infra murum noui chori reclusas*), but implies that they could be taken out for ostensions and processions.[1243] Thus they were possibly in an in-built aumbry with a door. The role or shape of the reliquaries is not mentioned. This chapel still exists, including a possible relic altar: an altar with apparent relic niches in the front side of the *mensa*. The niches are accentuated with decorative frames, and the altar has remains of the

[1240] SDHK 1248, *alias reliquias ponendas ad altare reliquiarum*; Källström 2011, 114–115; see also Romdahl 1922, 25.

[1241] *Skrifter, som udi det Kiøbenhavske selskab af lærdoms og videnskabers elskere, ere fremlagte og oplæste,* 240; DK: Esrum Klosterkirke, 1061.

[1242] Braun 1924, 545–573; see also Snoek 1995, 209–213.

[1243] In the celebration described, they are linked with the veneration of *Corpus Christi* at Easter, and with a new Pietá image; SDHK 17861. -A possible walled-in relic (a skeleton) was discovered in Hammarland church, Åland, where also the high altar was hollow and large enough to have contained an entire skeleton; see Ringbom 1995, 76–77; 91–92. However, members of royal families were also buried inside church walls; see Andås 2004, 192–193. For central European examples of walled-in relics, see also Kroos 1985, 30.

structures for a baldachin, which Källström interprets as signs of an altar with particular functions, probably the cult of relics. In fact, the baldachin and the presently empty niches alone are not indisputable indicators of functions related to the relic cult, as they might also be related to a developing cult of the host,[1244] but this case, the document supports the importance of relics in the chapel.

There is not enough material available for us to know if the written descriptions are referring to Nordic customs in general or just the special occasions such as feast days, but the latter seems most probable. It seems, as mentioned earlier, that most reliquaries only saw the light of day during festivities; otherwise they were kept stored away. Many visitors, living far from the nearest church, only arrived on those feast days so they might have had the impression that the reliquaries were always on display. In the late Middle Ages, it also became customary in some European churches to bring reliquaries out onto the altar for each mass and not just for the feasts. After mass, they were then taken back to the sacristy; this was also to avoid the precious objects being stolen.[1245]

The sacristy is mentioned as a storage place for relics in Vadstena Abbey.[1246] In Linköping Cathedral, reliquaries were not only stored in the sacristy, but visitors were also urged to pay their respects to one reliquary there in order to receive their indulgences. No explanation has been given as to why the reliquary stayed there, but Hanna Källström has suggested that the reliquary may have been one of the cathedral's major treasures – a large monstrance that was eventually confiscated in the 16th century. She even discusses the possibility of the above-mentioned altar having been in the sacristy to house the reliquary, but then dismisses that possibility because the sacristy was not yet built at the time the bishop donated the reliquary altar.[1247] In my view, the reliquary to be visited in the sacristy might have been an aumbry, which was basically a cupboard for reliquaries – and so, in effect, a reliquary for reliquaries.

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[1244] SDHK 17801; Nisbeth & Estham 2001, 39; 274; Cinthio & Cnattingius 1987, 313–314; Nisbeth 2001, 39; Källström 2011, 78–79; 114–115; 118.

[1245] Snoek 1995, 220–221. For other storage rooms for reliquaries, see Hahn 2012, 206.

[1246] Af Ugglas 1938, 269; Källström 2011, 206.

[1247] Källström 2011, 76–77; 119.

Chapels, crypts, and ambulatories were built for the storage, display and veneration of relics, such as the late-medieval chapel dedicated to the relics of the Virgin Mary in Linköping. In the Nidaros Cathedral, where the octagonal choir was built for the shrine of St Olaf, an adjacent side chapel was probably built for another precious relic – a drop of Christ's blood. The chapel became like a new, larger reliquary for the small but valuable relic in its tiny golden reliquary, which was possibly shaped like a ring. The chapel had seven aumbries or niches, of which three still remain, perhaps meant for relics as well. They possibly once had doors that could be opened on festive days. On the other hand, some of the niches could have been used for holding votives. Nordic aumbries have generally been interpreted as storage places for sacramental vessels, but at least aumbries, or almeries, elsewhere have also housed relics.[1248] The Nidaros chapel might have been similarly used as, for instance, the side chapel of St Ursula's Church in Cologne, where the relics of St Ursula and her 11,000 companions were housed. Various other relics were kept in those spaces in addition to the main ones, which is why the theory of relic niches surrounding the blood relic in its chapel seems plausible.[1249]

In the contemporary shape of medieval Nordic churches, it is not always easy to recognise spaces built for relics and reliquaries. After the Reformation, they may have been rebuilt or repurposed. In Skara, for instance, the crypt possibly once had a space built for relics.[1250] Those spaces were probably more common than what is known nowadays, and they would certainly merit study by a historian of architecture. Indeed, there are whole churches built for relics, such as Sainte-Chapelle in Paris and the Church of the Apostles in Bergen (both built for relics of the Crown of Thorns), not to mention many churches specifically built to house their patron saint's body – but those fall outside the scope of my thesis. I shall thus not elaborate on church architecture any further here; extensive and important studies on the topic are *Martyrium* by André Grabar and *The Architectural*

[1248] Legner 1995, 199–219; St John Hope 1907, 411–422.
[1249] Andås 2004, 185–188. The niches measured 55 x 45 cm.
[1250] Pernler 2004, 79–80.

*Setting of the Cult of Saints in the Early Christian West* by John Crook. Meanwhile, Cynthia Hahn's article "Seeing and Believing" illustrates the interplay of architectural, ornamental, iconographic and other factors in the pilgrim's experience of those early-medieval churches that were specifically built for housing the shrines of saints.[1251]

**Donated and Envisioned Reliquaries**

In the Nordic documents, it is hardly ever recorded how reliquaries are acquired; but commissions and donations are sometimes found in wills and other sources. Bishops and other clerics were active in commissioning, donating, and collecting funds to buy reliquaries and other ecclesiastic equipment, and they would be helped by wealthy laypeople. Elsewhere in Europe, certain commissioners' contribution in the design of masterpieces of religious art is so well documented that they have gained some of the artistic credit, and in some institutions, the clerics were also skilled craftsmen and could fulfil their own visions.[1252] In the Nordic material, such aesthetic visions are only usually seen in the final result. The names of many of the commissioners and donors are preserved for posterity in documents, and their emblems are on some of the reliquaries.

Bishop Magnus Tavast (Bishop of Turku 1412–1450) was very active in enriching the material dimension of the cult of saints in his diocese. One testimony of his patronage still remains in the church of Nousiainen. In his commission for the sarcophagus of St Henrik, Magnus visualised his dedication to the saint by having himself portrayed in humble prayer before the saint.[1253] For this and other details illustrating scenes from St Henrik's legend, the engraver must have received detailed instructions, but the correspondence has not been found. Magnus Tavast also brought reliquaries and other ecclesiastic treasures for Turku Cathedral from his pilgrimage in and around the year 1420. It is thought they were purchased in Venice

[1251] Grabar 1943–1946; Crook 2000; Hahn 1997b, 1079–1106. See also Palazzo 2010, 99–109.
[1252] Van Os 2000, 90; Hahn 2010b, 163–172.
[1253] Tuhkanen 2003, 240–241.

during his stay there.[1254] I presume he would have bought them ready-made, as there was probably no time to commission them. Perhaps it was possible to with personalise them with engravings added in the moment to associate the objects to the local saint and to the donor. The objects, including silver reliquaries for the head and arms of St Henrik (discussed above) and some other reliquaries for the *Corpus Christi* altar no longer exist.

Abbot Henrik Tornekrans of the Sorø Cistercian Abbey seems to have actively invested in the cult of relics just before the Reformation. In 1517, the pope granted him permission to purchase relics in Cologne and from the Abbey of the Three Fountains in Rome.[1255] He probably got hold of a large selection, which he then placed in three different spots around his church. Between 1525 and 1530, he commissioned an aumbry for the relics of two Roman martyrs. Together with the Bishop of Roskilde, Lage Urne, he also commissioned the large triumphal crucifix by the sculptor Claus Berg in 1527, with four relic niches, and inserted a casket with sixteen relics into the Holy Cross altar situated below the crucifix, marking his contributions with his coat of arms.[1256]

Bishops were also responsible for the maintenance of reliquaries. In 1517, all the relics in Stavanger Cathedral seem to have been stored in St Swithun's casket or shrine. This may have been because of the poor condition of other reliquaries, and because some relics had even lost their *authentica* – their names may have been forgotten but they were "written in the book of life in the kingdom of heaven". Bishop Hoskold and his colleagues, who inspected and listed the relics, were not satisfied with the situation, however, so they donated vessels from

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[1254] Juusten 1988, 60: "*Terram Sanctam in magnis periculis et expensis adiit, Venetiisque preciosiora hujus ecclesiae indumenta fieri fecit et comparavit. Hic plurimos theologiae et juris libros ad usum ecclesiae acquisivit. Ejus tempore et eo cooperante caput et brachia beati Henrici argentea facta sunt. Calix, patena et monile ex auro purissimo, crux illa magna et preciosa de argento fabricatur. Evangeliare et epistolare diligentissime conscripta, argento ornatur, et alia quam plurima ecclesiae indumenta et clenodia coemuntur*." Juusten 1988, 58: "*Monstrantiam preciosam valde, in summitate altaris positam superfecit, et ipsum altare preciosis indumentis aliisque reliquiariis et clenodiis quam plurimis magnifice decoravit*." See also Palola 1997, 199.

[1255] *Acta Ponificum Danica*, 200–201.

[1256] DK: Sorø, 54; 64; 68.

the bishop's and the episcopal see's collections to improve it – and to gain the saints' help for their sinful souls, as they wrote. Along with the list of relics, the bishop has written rules about dealing with relics – giving them away or using them as items of exchange was strictly forbidden.[1257]

The fourteenth-century canon Nils Jonsson did not commission a reliquary sculpture of St Francis, but instead required in his will that the Franciscan Abbey in Linköping should do so. He left the abbey a relic he had acquired during his pilgrimage to Rome, a fragment of a bandage of St Francis, which he must have kept up to that point in a simple casket or pouch. Now the canon's wish was that the amount of one mark of silver, which he was giving to the Franciscans together with the relic, would be used to make a gilt silver image for keeping the relic. This could have been based on an object he had seen in Swedish churches or on his travels. Nils Jonsson brought back other relics from Rome, too, which were donated to the cathedral with as much as three marks of silver for the making of their reliquary or reliquaries. Curiously, though he invests more silver on those than on the reliquary of St Francis, he neither specifies the identity of these relics nor the desired shapes for their future reliquaries. What he did consider mentioning, though, was how he acquired them: directly from the holy hands of Birgitta, who was then living in Rome; and from her chaplain, Peter Olofsson.[1258]

The contributions of the Archbishops of Lund to the cathedral treasury are well documented, mostly in the fifteenth-century *Ordo in ostensione sanctarum reliquiarum*.[1259] Lund Cathedral regularly received reliquaries and other holy treasures from its archbishops across the

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[1257] *Jtem kære wenner effther thij ath wii *swnnem thesse forscriffne verdige helgedomer ekke saa vyrdelighe bevareth ware som thet bwrde tha haffwom wij med waar kære capituli rod oc samtycth skikket oc giffwet ther til helgedome kaar nagle skwnner bwdne oc obwdne som oss oc ware biscope stol til hørde,* DN 4:1074. (I was not able to clarify the exact meaning of "*skwnner bwdne*", but similar expressions are found in other Norwegian medieval texts: *Skunner bunar; skunner vbunar; buina; vbuin* – see also DN 6:326.) -Unfortunately the bishop's rules were not enough to protect the treasures for long; the bishop was imprisoned and the reliquaries taken by confiscators twenty years later. See Kielland 1927, 12–13.

[1258] SDHK 9267.

[1259] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 77–109.

centuries. Archbishop Eskil donated three reliquaries of *'electro'* (translated alternatively as amber or a mixture of two metals) and ivory, among other treasures, around the time the main altar was consecrated in 1145.[1260] Eskil is also credited for bringing thirteen heads of the 11,000 Virgins to the church at Esrum Abbey in 1153.[1261] Bishops Andreas Sunesen and Uffo Trugotsen also donated reliquaries to Lund Cathedral in the 13th century, as did the canons Boecius Sommer, Anders Madsen, and Peder Hermansen in the 15th century.[1262]

Clerics also had reliquaries among their personal belongings, and they often bequeathed them to churches or colleagues. Archbishop Petrus of Lund mentioned two such rings in his will of 1391 – the Prior of Dalby Augustinian Abbey was to have his golden ring containing relics of the True Cross, while Bosø Abbey would have his sapphire ring which had been charged with the power of holy relics, having been placed by the Veronica relic in Rome – this had made the ring a contact relic.[1263] The Franciscan Abbey in Roskilde received two crucifixes with relics from Bishop Jacobus Thepp and Vicar Marquardus Moorn of Lübeck.[1264] In Uppsala, 1496, Archbishop Jacob Ulfsson bequeathed an item of personal devotion, his "daily" reliquary pendant, to his successor.[1265] In his 1434 will, Laurencius Nikolai, Dean of Roskilde, left his golden cross pendant with relics of his patron, St Lawrence, for a military friend or relative named Esger.[1266]

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[1260] SDHK 182, 09.01.1145, Fvndacio & institucio quarundam dignitatum et prebendarum per dominum Eskillum archiepiscopum: *"Ad reliquias recondendas Capsam preciosam ex electro. Duas eburneas."* See also Axel-Nilsson 1989, 34.

[1261] Crombach 1647, 668.

[1262] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 31–47; 93–105.

[1263] *unum annulum aureum, in quo de ligno sancte crucis reliquie sunt reposite, ita tamen quod non alienetur, sed perpetuis temporibus cum reliquiis observetur; unum annulum aureum cum saphiro, quem reponi volumus cum reliquiis, positum tangibiliter Rome supra veronicam Domini.* Erslev 1901, 157.

[1264] SRD VIII, 281.

[1265] *til sin Successor, sit dagliga Helgadoma kar som war en gulltafla med gullkedia,* Peringskiöld 1719, 170.

[1266] (*crucem auream cum reliquiis sancti Laurencii et cum cathenis*), Erslev 1901, 207.

In the canonisation protocol of bishop Nils Hermansson of Linköping, the bishop is also portrayed as a generous donor of treasures. His friends had come to the cathedral to participate in his episcopal inauguration, but they lamented that they had no gifts for the high altar in honour of the occasion. Nils Hermansson went to the sacristy and brought out some reliquaries and other treasures, which he gave to his friends so they could bring them to the high altar.[1267] Those reliquaries must have been his personal possessions for him to be able to give them away like this. He might have purchased them in Avignon, where he had gone to visit just beforehand. There is no reference to the contents of the reliquaries, but it is possible that empty reliquaries were donated to the altar for later use.

A large part of a church's treasure was based on donations made for the sake of the donors' souls, '*pro anima*' or '*pro memoria*'. Wealthy laypeople donated and bequeathed plenty of valuable objects, including reliquaries, to churches and abbeys to gain indulgences for their sins, and prayers for their afterlife – not unlike the motives of royal or episcopal donors. Gratitude, but also self-promotion and perhaps personal interest in the visual and material aspects of the cult, were other motives for the many donations that made purchasing and commissioning new reliquaries possible. The memory of donors and commissioners of high status could live on either in the church documents, as in the lists of reliquaries, or directly inscribed onto the donated objects. Earlier in this thesis, a few reliquaries with donors' names, or coats of arms were discussed. Often the individuals in question were active commissioners, and their family symbol or image can be seen in several works of church art. Bishop Magnus Tawast of Turku had himself portrayed on the copper plates he commissioned for the sarcophagus of St Henrik in Nousiainen; Abbot Henrik Tornekrans in Sorø marked the relic aumbry with the coats of arms of his parents and colleagues; Prebendary Nils Johansson Lenck of Stockholm Cathedral had his name inscribed on the silver reliquary statuette of St Catherine of Alexandria; and a Danish nobleman of the Ulfstand family had his coat of arms painted on the arm reliquary of one of the 10,000 Knights.

[1267] Lundén 1963, 238–241.

Among the fifteenth-century donors were Lady Christina of Gladsax, Lady Barbara Brahe and the Chamberlain of the Lund curia, Niels Tuvesen (Nicolaus Tuvonis), who each donated a silver reliquary statuette to Lund Cathedral.[1268] Indeed, people who could afford such items were often generous to churches – Barbara Brahe also commissioned altars, vaults and art to several Danish churches, while Lady Christina also donated an ostrich egg reliquary to Lund Cathedral. The gifts probably came with expressions of gratitude or expectations of prayers, but they were also status symbols, adding to the reputation of the donors. In Uppsala, when a wealthy Sir Magnus' health was restored in front of St Eric's reliquary in 1293, he donated an expensive baldachin "to the martyr" – the baldachin was probably used on top of the shrine.[1269]

Like clerics and rulers, there were some wealthy laypeople with small reliquaries in their homes. When a reliquary is mentioned in a will, it can be assumed it was in private use, and many of them might have been pilgrimage souvenirs. The most typical privately-owned reliquary was a cross pendant, often with a relic of the True Cross inside. Widow Cecilia Kalf, in 1304, wished to be buried in the nearest Dominican abbey, which would then inherit her cross with a relic of the True Cross and other items.[1270] The benefactors of the Naantali Abbey in Finland, nobleman Henrik Classon Djäkn and his spouse, Lucia Olavsdotter Skelge, rewrote their wills twice. In 1449, Djäkn promised his silver reliquary pendant to Naantali Abbey, and Skelge intended to donate her gilt cross with a relic (probably a pendant as well) to the Bishop of Turku. The relics were not described in any greater detail in these first wills, but in the later versions (1451, 1452, 1453 and 1455), reliquaries are no longer even mentioned.[1271] They may have already donated or sold the reliquaries, or they decided to

[1268] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 105–106.

[1269] Lundén 1945, 31; 57. Another translation (to a new shrine) took place between 1344 and 1419 according to Lundén 1945, 33.

[1270] (*crucem auream, quam habeo, in qua est lignum domini*), Erslev 1901, 51.

[1271] ("*ena hwita silff kædho cum reliquiario*"), DF 2817; DF 2908. ("*mith kors förgylt met helgadoma*"), DF 2818; DF 2886.

have the reliquaries buried with them in accordance with the early Christian *ad sanctos* tradition.[1272]

Pendants were not the only reliquaries in private homes: Ingrid Svantepolksdotter's will in 1321 included a silver pyx with relics for Vreta Abbey[1273]; while in 1447, a relic (*hellichdom*) – and most likely reliquary – were bequeathed by the knight Anders Nilsson to Esrom Church, where he wished to be buried.[1274]

Although these reliquaries were specifically made and purchased for personal and private devotion, they were clearly not perceived as family heirlooms in the same way as silver jewellery or tableware, as they were bequeathed to churches, abbeys, or clerics. Due to the small number of examples, however, this pattern should not be overemphasised – it may simply reflect the close ties the owners had with the church or clerics. Moreover, privately owned reliquaries were not only bequeathed to the Church: in the section on St Birgitta, a young man was reported to have inherited a reliquary pendant from his father; while Lady Ingeborg Eskilsdotter of Uppsala left her golden reliquary cross to her daughter in 1360.[1275]

Clerics were mentioned, at the beginning of this chapter, as visionary commissioners of sacred art; but laypeople also had ideas concerning this, if on a somewhat smaller scale. The words used to describe intended future reliquaries are not radically different from the descriptions of existing ones; yet, they reflect a different stage in the life cycle of a reliquary. The documents do not always offer clues for interpreting the thinking behind the words; for various reasons, for instance, the shape and materials of one future reliquary were specifically planned, while for others (even if equally valuable) it sufficed to note simply that a reliquary of some kind would be made that would be worthy of the contents.

In November 1322, Katarina, the spouse of Nils Björnsson, asked to be buried at the Cistercian Abbey of Riseberga. Naturally she could

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[1272] For more on Lucia Olofsdotter and Naantali, see Räsänen 2009, 111–115; on other crosses in her wills, see Immonen 2009, 185.

[1273] (*pixidem argenteam cum reliquijs*). Ingrid Svantepolksdotter's donation to Vreta Abbey in 1321, SDHK 3075.

[1274] Erslev 1901, 210.

[1275] DS 5880, "(--) *et filie mee dilecte vnam crucem auream cum reliquiis* (--)"

not expect that without accompanying making a generous donation, so she left the abbey, among other things, her fragment of the True Cross, and two golden buckles or brooches, which the abbess was requested to have fashioned into a cross reliquary for the holy relic.[1276] The relic must have already been kept in a container of some kind, but for some reason she either decided not to donate it with the relic or did not consider her container worthy of mention in the document – perhaps it was a small textile pouch worn as a pendant. Her envisioning of what this reliquary should look like is not very detailed, but it follows the tradition of placing cross relics in cross-shaped reliquaries.

The opinion of a noblewoman named Benedicta Matsdotter concerning reliquaries is included in the early fifteenth-century *miracula* of Blessed Nils Hermansson of Linköping. Lady Benedicta undoubtedly offered a generous donation in honour of the help she had received from the saint, but perhaps on account of the donation, her concern for the proper way of presenting bishop Nils' remains in the Linköping Cathedral was also documented. A regular episcopal stone tomb would not suffice; she expressed a wish to see Nils Hermansson translated to a shrine "like that of other saints" (*more aliorum sanctorum*).[1277] The inclusion of this opinion in the *miracula* must have helped show the popular devotion for Nils Hermansson and the need of an official translation.

**Making, Repairing, Substituting, Recycling and Selling**

Objects, artisans and knowledge were moving throughout the Catholic world, and artistic influences moved most efficiently with small, easily transportable objects such as books, textiles and reliquaries.[1278] However, as both artisans and styles were mobile, it is not so easy to locate the origin of most objects, and that will have to be the topic of a different project. There were artisan workshops in most towns or religious centres that had good access to materials from

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[1276] *particulam quam habeo de ligno domini, cum duabus fibulis aureis de quibus domina abbatissa eiusdem monasterii, crucem fieri faciat, jn qua eadem particula de ligno domini, honorifice reponatur,* SDHK 3166; *Närkes medeltida urkunder*, 31–32.

[1277] Lundén 1963, 328; see also Fröjmark 1992, 132.

[1278] King 1995, 96–121; Tegnér 1997a, 134–137; see also von Bonsdorff 1993, 46–53.

abroad.[1279] In the 14th and 15th centuries, most goldsmiths in Nordic towns were German and Dutch, but due to the style of some preserved objects in Norway, it seems there were a few English goldsmiths too. Meanwhile documents from Bergen have both Norwegian and Icelandic names.[1280] Iceland had its own production of ecclesiastic objects in precious metals, and it seems some of those objects ended up in Norwegian or Danish churches. Skilful enamel-workers lived in Iceland as well – at least one by name of Eyolf was known for that, but none of his work seems to be preserved in Norway, and most of the surviving enamels are from Limoges.[1281] The reputation of Icelandic reliquary-makers is ambiguous: written documents refer to skilled goldsmiths, but in Norway, the clumsiest of the preserved house-shaped caskets have been identified as possibly Icelandic.[1282]

A few goldsmiths, sculptors and painters are known by name and their works identified, but usually the makers of Nordic reliquaries are even less well-known than their commissioners. Towards the end of the Middle Ages, more documents related to artisanal work are preserved. Payment receipts from the 16th century attest to commissions received by goldsmiths in Stockholm. The commissions for reliquaries were prestigious and probably well paid, but the documents also witness some difficulties: the making of the shrine for St Eric apparently took Master Lambrecht nine years, and after finishing the project in 1414, he was in massive debt to the cathedral and had to give up his house and other possessions to pay for it; the problem was not his failure to deliver a new shrine, but to reliably

[1279] Nicolaysen 1888, 17.

[1280] Kielland 1927, 498–503; Sølver 1929, 29–56. See also DN 13:634 for the items confiscated from a goldsmith in North Norway.

[1281] At least two other full-body sarcophagi apparently existed in Iceland in the cathedrals of Skalholt and Holar, for the relics of the local saints Jon Helgi and Gudmundr Helgi. Nicolaysen 1888, 12–15.

[1282] Grieg 1973, 24; Grinder-Hansen 1999, 71–72. More verbal descriptions of ecclesiastic art are preserved from medieval Iceland than from any other Nordic country. Bishops' sagas and annals are rich sources on the topic. Also there are many surviving church inventory lists from Iceland with largely similar contents to the Norwegian ones. For more on Icelandic reliquaries, see also Fett 1909, 146; Sigurðsson 2014, 67–74.

account for the whole amount of silver received for the purpose.[1283] Lambrecht may also have been the maker of St Birgitta's Shrine in 1408–1412, and if that was the case, it could partly explain why the construction of St Eric's shrine was delayed. Master Johannes Menss' work on the five gilt silver plates for Katarina of Vadstena's shrine began in 1513, but seems to have been suspended for some time due to lack of funds; ten years later, in 1524, the plates were apparently ready, but had still not been attached.[1284] The last and only extant shrine of St Eric took Master Rosenfeldt and his colleagues six years to build,[1285] while the making of the last gilt silver shrine to St Birgitta (finished in 1582), only took two years for Master Hans Theuson.[1286]

Substituting old reliquaries with new ones was considered a routine event in their centennial maintenance, albeit a very costly undertaking. Purchasing a new reliquary was a duty towards the relics, but it could not be done often, nor without a very wealthy sponsor or decades of collecting money for the purpose. In Uppsala, silver for the new shrine of St Eric was being collected at least five decades in advance. In 1351, Archbishop Hemming of Uppsala bequeathed 40 silver marks for its construction, and in 1360, the future shrine received a silver donation of two marks from Archdeacon Ringvid Nilsson. A collection of silver items donated to the altar of St Eric, for the benefit of his future silver shrine, was kept in the sacristy of the cathedral.[1287]

The old reliquary was in some cases incorporated in the new one, as we have already seen with St Olaf in Nidaros and St Eric in Uppsala, becoming like a secondary relic as it was now an indivisible part of the original relic. The *virtus* of a relic was contagious, transcending the materials surrounding and enclosing it. The miraculous capacities of old reliquaries could also be shared by

[1283] Bygdén 1954, 333–336; Bengtsson 2010, 139.
[1284] Lindblom 1963, 24.
[1285] Bengtsson 2010, 139; see also Källström & Bygdén 1948, 49–64.
[1286] Lindblom 1963, 20–21.
[1287] *pro factura scrinii beati Erici,* SDHK 6171; *pro scrineo beati Erici*, SDHK 7842; Bygdén 1954, 332.

breaking them up, as we saw with the casket of St Birgitta in Rome.[1288] Another option was to reuse the materials to make new reliquaries (not explicitly documented in any Nordic sources), or to repurpose the old reliquary (with minor adjustments) for new relics – as was done with the old shrine of St Birgitta at the translation feast of St Katarina in Vadstena. The old reliquaries could also remain in their place and continue to be venerated despite their contents having been transferred to a different reliquary. This may have been the case with the sarcophagus of St Henrik in Nousiainen after at least a large part of the saint's relics were moved to Turku Cathedral.[1289]

What caused reliquaries to wear out was being touched and carried in processions. Due to the contagious character of the relics' *virtus*, devout visitors would often attempt (and sometimes manage) to take small parts of reliquaries with them as contact relics.[1290] Broken or worn-out reliquaries could also be kept in use, probably depending, among other factors, on the availability of means for purchasing new ones. In Lund Cathedral, one of the large shrines and an ivory pyx had broken lids, and another shrine had a lock that could not be used.[1291] This seems to indicate that the reliquaries were frequently opened, perhaps by force. A broken reliquary is included also in the list of the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, still containing relics and thus apparently still usable.[1292]

The Nordic reliquary lists carry signs of reliquaries being substituted with new ones, but the reasons are usually not registered. In the lists of Lund Cathedral and Our Lady of Copenhagen, for instance, certain reliquaries are crossed out and substituted with notes about new ones.[1293] Relics sometimes lost their identity in the process, and the Danish Franciscan reliquary lists begin with a reminder of

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[1288] See above; for a parallel case from eleventh-century France, see Head 1990, 159; Dierkens 1997, 249.

[1289] In Siena, Italy, the head-shaped reliquary for the skull of St Catherine was substituted with a new, transparent one, but the old, empty one has become a relic of sorts and is still on display in the church. -For more on the new uses of empty reliquaries, see also Dierkens 1997, 248–252.

[1290] Kroos 1985, 26–27.

[1291] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 96; 104.

[1292] *In majori cucumere deaurato & fracto in medio*, SRD VIII, 263.

[1293] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 95; SRD VIII, 265–266; Jexlev 1976, 35; 38.

this: the author states that the relics have been repeatedly switched from one reliquary to another, and both reliquaries and *authentica* have disappeared or become illegible over time.[1294] As a result, the lists of contents of most reliquaries end with anonymous relics; in the case of some reliquaries, their entire contents were unknown, and yet this did not make them worthless. Even if the contents were unknown to mortals, being "written in the book of life in heaven" meant they were at least known to God.[1295]

However, unless there were means of purchasing a new reliquary, old ones were usually repaired. The earliest information about this concerns the twelfth-century bishop Bengt (Benedict) of Skara, who, according to a thirteenth-century chronicle, arranged for two reliquaries in Skara Cathedral to be examined for their contents and repaired.[1296] In Uppsala, the old shrine of St Eric was repaired on Archbishop Petrus Thyrgilsson's orders, when in 1359 the shrine seemed too fragile to survive the next procession. The repairs were swiftly made in a couple of days by the local carpenter Thomas and the goldsmith Egardus.[1297] The account books of Kumla church mentions a payment for repairing the casket of St Thorkil in 1514 and again for repairing the foot of a shrine in 1533.[1298] One or more reliquaries from Bolstad church were repaired in 1519 by a Claus Goldsmith.[1299] An image or a figure was also added to the shrine of St Eric in 1531; it must have been either an improvement or a substitution for a broken detail.[1300]

In some wills, when donations for reliquaries or shrines are mentioned, it is not certain whether they were intended for making, repairing, or improving the reliquary. Such was the case with the *archa* for the relics of St Hallvard in Oslo, which received money in the will of canon Gerlak in 1304.[1301] St Hallvard had a shrine, but the

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[1294] SRD VIII, 269; 282.

[1295] SRD VIII, 292; 297; 302; 304–305; 312; DN 4:1074.

[1296] *Samling af Sweriges gamla lagar*, 306; Pernler 2004, 79.

[1297] Bygdén 1954, 323–324.

[1298] von Bonsdorff 1993, 127; *Kumla kyrkas räkenskapsbok,* 1946, 11; 98; xcix.

[1299] Dalslands Diplomatarium, 277: *Item Clawus Gwlsmiidh subleuauit x öre pro reparacione reliquiariorum*.

[1300] Bengtsson 2010, 139.

[1301] *Ad archam reliquiarum sancti Halluardi duos denarios aureos et iij marchas puri,* Dipl.Norv. 75.

donation could have been meant for the commissioning of a new one. In a still more ambiguous note, monk Haakon Guttormssøn donated a silver bowl "for a reliquary" to St Hallvard's Cathedral sacristy in 1427.[1302] In this case, it can be assumed either that the bowl itself was a reliquary, or that it was donated as a piece of reusable silver, with the intention that it be melted down to make a new reliquary or repair an existing one – perhaps the reliquary of St Hallvard. In Uppsala, in a will in 1452, two silver bowls were similarly bequeathed to the cathedral for making a reliquary – the result was apparently a footed vessel with the coat of arms of the donor on it.[1303] In 1360, the Archdeacon of Uppsala Cathedral donated two marks of silver and a gem to the shrine of St Eric – apparently contributing to the collection of funds for a new shrine.[1304] In Riseberga Abbey, an arm reliquary was the recipient of silver in the will of Nils Svensson in 1434.[1305] The source text, "to/for St Catholica's arm", does not specify whether the arm in question was to be commissioned or only repaired – or if the donor had been healed by the reliquary and wanted to donate the silver as a votive gift. Speculation is inevitable, as characteristically, none of these objects are mentioned anywhere else.

Documents reveal that reliquaries were not only purchased or donated; they could also be disposed of. Depending on the economic situation, old reliquaries of silver or gold were even recycled as materials for new objects or as means of payment. What now sounds sacrilegious could be acceptable in circumstances of extreme hardship. A preferable alternative was to sell the valuable artefacts to a person or institution that would handle them with all due care and respect.[1306]

Most of the Nordic references to the selling of reliquaries are from Vadstena. In documents from 1447 and 1449, the inhabitants of Vadstena Abbey lament that they were forced to sell chalices and reliquaries to gain money for food.[1307] Fortunately, they had plenty of

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[1302] *[sy]lf skall pro reliquiario*, Dipl. Norv. 579.
[1303] Bengtsson 2010, 148.
[1304] SDHK 7842; Bengtsson 2010, 136.
[1305] Källström 1939, 235; Grandinson 1935, *Närkes medeltida urkunder*, 109–111; SDHK 22143 (the detail of the arm is not included in the summary in the SDHK website).
[1306] Dierkens 1999, 251–252; Bagnoli 2011, 138.
[1307] SDHK 25148; SDHK 25445.

items to sell, as the abbey had received more precious gifts from King Eric and Queen Philippa than in fact what their order's rules permitted the abbey to possess.[1308] In the documents, it is not specified to whom the items were sold, but in 1454, King Karl Knutsson helped the abbey monetise their treasures. He took many of the jewels and other non-religious objects, such as two royal crowns, and changed them into their value in money or gold. Instead of referring to the abbey's economic needs, he legitimised the exchange by stating that the queen's worldly treasures were unsuitable for the abbey to possess. In addition, it seems he also bought a reliquary – a golden tablet that Queen Philippa had donated thirty years earlier. Twenty-four years later, the tablet was given back to the abbey as mandated in King Karl's will.[1309] The economic challenges seem to have continued, however, as in 1459, the abbess and general confessor stated that it had been necessary to use a large part of the abbey's superfluous donations for paying papal taxes and renovations. In the same document, perhaps to remind the readers of the legitimacy of this economic policy, they mentioned the Birgittine prohibition against the possession of unnecessary treasures. The previous exchange with King Karl had, however, allowed the abbey to substitute a wooden reliquary donated earlier by Queen Philippa with a precious reliquary of gold, and this golden reliquary was only to be sold in case of extreme need.[1310] The last comment reflects the fragile economic stability of the abbey: even with generous sponsors and the institution's own rule encouraging the selling rather than accumulation of valuable items, they were forced to consider a worst-case scenario where the last golden reliquary would have to be sold. The abbey was also forced to sell the crystal reliquary of St Katarina's

[1308] According to the Birgittine rule, *Regula S. Salvatoris* (chapter 21), collecting gold, silver and gems beyond the necessary *vasa sacra* is to be avoided; on the other hand, the rule states it is acceptable to adorn relics of saints with gold, silver or gems, but moderately, without excess. For more on Karl Knutsson's visit and Philippa's relation with Vadstena, see also Berglund 2009, 21–32.

[1309] DV 641–642; Gejrot 1988, 228; Carlsson 1956, 104–106; SDHK 30357–30358.

[1310] SDHK 27358.

chin in 1540, even though they had apparently managed to save it from confiscation earlier that year.[1311]

King Karl's actions with Vadstena might also be interpreted as pawnbroking even if he did not seem to require a payback in the end. Another case of pawning is known from Strängnäs Cathedral in Sweden where, among other treasures, three of the reliquaries were pawned to the regent, Svante Sture. The reasons for this are unclear as are the destinies of the objects, as no receipt of their return to the cathedral exists.[1312] Two late-medieval cases of reliquaries being pawned for money are known from Denmark. In both cases, the purpose was not to save the churches themselves, but the bishops involved needed to pay for official documents related to their position. In 1479, Archbishop Birger Gundersen borrowed and pawned a selection of objects from Lund Cathedral, among which were chalices, patens and two reliquaries – a large crowned head of silver and a silver image of a bishop with a gilt foot.[1313] In the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen, two silver heads were borrowed to Bishop Joachim Rønnow, who probably pawned them in order to pay his debt to the king in 1529. The bishop did not personally choose the reliquaries, but received them after asking for some silver items that were "less often used".[1314] The spirit of the impending Reformation might already have contributed to the marginalisation of reliquaries in the latter case, and it seems that repurposing church treasures for economic means like this was quite acceptable. No documents of returning the objects to the cathedrals have survived, but at least in the case of Rønnow, the Reformation must have rendered it unnecessary.

A fifteenth-century document in the Black Book of Turku Cathedral introduces a reliquary involved in a different economic exchange – a land trade contract – but why the object was included in this exchange is unclear. Bishop Konrad Bitz, as representative of Turku Cathedral's chapter, bought Kurala farm near Turku from a

[1311] Silfverstolpe 1895, 13–15; see also Andersson 1983, 94; Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 70.
[1312] Källström 1939, 261.
[1313] Wrangel 1923, 19; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 39.
[1314] DK: Vor Frue kirke, København, 38; Rørdam 1859–63, 31.

man named Peder Erickson on 20 May, 1477. Among the agreed payments was a silver reliquary pendant, "*eth helgedoms kar met sylf kadher*".[1315] It was perhaps a similar object to the one mentioned in Henrik Classon's will of 1449.

Without further background information, we can only guess what the meaning of the pendant was in the agreement. Did the land-owner specifically demand a reliquary? Did the church or the cathedral chapter have such a selection of reliquaries that giving one away would not matter? Were such pendants made in Turku perhaps for pilgrims to buy? Or was it easier in the economic situation for the chapter to give away a silver pendant than money? Ecclesiastic law allowed reliquaries to be sold, but not to laypeople; it also stated that relics must be removed from them beforehand.[1316] Nevertheless, as even Nordic material shows, wealthy laypeople had both reliquaries and relics, so the law must have been frequently broken. The document does not refer to any relic in the reliquary, which might mean it was empty. Perhaps Peder Erickson already had a small relic and needed a pendant for carrying it with him. If it did include a relic, it should have been relevant information for both parties of the agreement – except if the payment had not yet been made and the land-owner receiving it had agreed to accept any relic the bishop chose to include. Another possible explanation could be that the contents of the reliquary were well known to both and thus left out of the agreement.

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Through fragments of information found in medieval documents, it is possible to gain an understanding of the different stages of a

[1315] REA 655 (20.5.1477); see also Immonen 2009, 187. - Two further documents concerning the same purchase, written on 20 and 22 May, do not mention the reliquary. The agreement may have changed or it was simply omitted. The document from 20 May does not mention the item at all, while the 22 May mentions only the silver chain – specifying it had previously belonged to vicar Martinus Olavi of Kemi. Why he was mentioned is not clear – though the fields of Kurala were divided between several owners, he was not among them. See REA 656 (20.5.1477) and REA 658 (22.5.1477).

[1316] Herrmann-Mascard 1975, 32–339; Dierkens 1997, 251–252.

reliquary's "life" in the Nordic countries. Looking at reliquaries through miracle stories and other religious documents, one can grasp their immense spiritual value and the ways they mediated the saintly *virtus* in the encounters with pilgrims, whether stored behind aumbry doors, placed on the altar or carried around in procession. In documents of commissions, repairs and economical transactions, the social and material value of reliquaries is revealed. Together these documents constitute a history of their meanings and impact on people's lives during the processes of their production, acquisition, maintenance, and worship.

Reliquaries were part of a multi-sensory religious experience, bringing forth the presence of relics and speaking to the eyes, hands, mouth and nose – to the senses as well as the emotions – of their audiences, pilgrims and clergy. Remarkable amounts of money and valuable materials were collected in order to purchase reliquaries worthy of the venerated relics and elaborate enough to impress the pilgrims and compete with the treasures of other churches. Funds were spent on repairing and improving reliquaries, too. Despite all this, already before the Reformation, the silver and gold reliquaries could apparently also be seen as a potential monetary resource and sold or pawned in case of emergency. As for the people involved with reliquaries in different roles – such as commissioners, makers, custodians and audiences – each of them viewed and perceived them in different ways and in different contexts.

## 11 – Reliquaries During and After the Reformation

The main cause for the disappearance of the hundreds or thousands of medieval reliquaries discussed in this study is the sixteenth-century Reformation. Relics and most images of saints lost their status in the Church, as their worship was strongly condemned.[1317] In Nordic countries, the process was not as violent or iconoclastic as it was on the southern shores of the Baltic, but in terms of reliquaries, the result was practically the same. Royalty and Lutheran clergy were as active in removing relics and reliquaries as their predecessors had been in

[1317] Arwidsson VIII, 1856, 162–163; Rex 1993, 60–63; 90–94; Angenendt 1997, 236–241; Hirvonen 2004, 364–373.

acquiring them. Church treasures were confiscated mainly for the sake of their economic value, as gold and silver were needed to finance the armies. With the closure of monasteries and convents, some former centres of relic cults ceased to exist. In spite of all this, an unofficial reverence for saints seems to have continued in some churches, and some relics, images of saints, and altars dedicated to them did survive.[1318]

Although they were explicitly banned, attitudes towards relics and the images of saints did not change overnight: the process took the whole 16th century, and there was plenty of discussion, opposition and varying opinions. Theologians and monarchs publicly expressed their views on the new status of saints and their images, while the situation in the parish churches changed slowly and reluctantly. In Sweden, Olaus Petri was already writing critically on the cults of relics and holy images in Swedish abbeys in 1528.[1319] In Lutheran rhetoric, Catholic practices were simply described as paganism. Luther himself did not only ban the cult of relics, but mocked it in a satirical text.[1320] The new principles are expressed in a moderate tone in Archbishop Laurentius Petri Nericius' *Canon Ecclesiasticus* or church ordinance, published in 1571 but written ten years earlier. Images of saints in the church (at least of certain saints, such as St George and St Christopher) were accepted as models of a virtuous life, not as objects of worship. Images that attracted pilgrims and were believed to have miraculous power had to be removed altogether. Ex-votos and candles around the sculptures were an indicator of lay devotion, and so they were to be banished, just like the cult image itself. Consecrations of churches, altars or images as well as processions with images and reliquaries – two traditions that had been very important for local communities – were also banned as heathen traditions.[1321] However, the reformers

[1318] Zachrisson 2017, 86–133.

[1319] Olavus Petri 1914, 508; see also Lundén 1983, 264.

[1320] Heininen 2015, 147–148.

[1321] See also Lindgren 1983, 12–19; 240; Pirinen 1996, 17–35; 93–99. Laurentius Petri 1971, 14, quoted in Pirinen 1996, 28: "*All Process ther man haffuer plägat vthbära Beläte, Monstrantz, skrijn och annor Helghedoma kaar, skola så bliffua som the nu äro afflagd. Ty alt slijkt är Hedniskt och affgudeskt*." The same principle was expressed in the Danish church ordinance. See e.g. Bolvig 1996, 72.

were aware of the importance of saints for the laity, and therefore the lives of saints continued to be part of Lutheran sermons. At Luther's request, the "Lives of Saints" (*Vitae Patrum*) was edited to suit the new principles, as were local liturgy books too. In Turku, when Archbishop Mikael Agricola translated prayers from the medieval *Missale Aboense* into Finnish, he made sure the prayers for intercession and other aspects of saints as helpers were toned down, and their virtuous lives were simply presented as examples for the believers.[1322] Some wooden images of saints were allowed to stay, even if the active cult related to them and to reliquaries was prohibited in 1544.[1323]

Despite the generally moderate attitudes towards images of saints, the waves of iconoclastic attacks reached at least two churches in Denmark. When a group of "billedstormers" attacked St Peter's Church in Malmö in 1529 and the Church of Our Lady in Copenhagen in December 1530 and in 1534, altars and images of saints were destroyed, certainly some reliquaries as well.[1324] In 1561, at the Council of Lund, the images of saints that had remained in Danish churches were prohibited altogether.[1325] There were iconoclastic attacks against churches in Stockholm, too, inspired by the visit of protestant preacher Melchior Hoffman in 1525. [1326] St Nicholas Church (*Storkyrkan*) lost its remaining images of saints in 1596, but the large St George with the dragon, containing some national symbolism as a memorial to the Battle of Brunkeberg, remained mostly intact.[1327] More than by iconoclasm, the churches were plundered by monarchs when

[1322] Hirvonen 2004, 364–373; Heininen 2015, 147–161.

[1323] Jensen 1922, 175–200; Zachrisson 2017, 86–133. For comparison with other European countries, see e.g. Rex 1993, 72–103; Angenendt 1997, 236–253; Joblin 1999, 123–141.

[1324] Weibull 1904, 99–100; Jensen 1922, 175–177; Liebgott 1982, 131–132; See also Lindgren 1983, 19; Bolvig 1996, 96–101.

[1325] Axel-Nilsson 1989, 20.

[1326] Pirinen 1996, 21–22.

[1327] Werwing 1746, 295; Thordeman 1964, 7. -In 1596, according to the chronicle by Werwing, the Governor of Finland, Clas Fleming, saved some of the altarpieces and other images of Turku Cathedral from destruction: the Cathedral had been stripped of all images by the local bishop and the consistorium following the orders of the Swedish reformers, but Fleming, who was sympathetic to the Catholic king Sigismund, ordered the images to be returned for safekeeping. Werwing 1746, 300.

they confiscated silver items. Some of them started in advance: the treasures of the Church of Our Lady in Oslo escaped a plundering by Swedish and Lubeckian troops in 1524 only to be taken by the men of the Danish King Christian III a few years before the Reformation, in 1530.[1328]

In the end of the reforming 16th century, the last members of Catholic orders were sent out. Archbishop Abraham Angermannus visited Swedish pilgrimage sites in 1596 in order to make sure the central shrines were demolished in order to finally end the worship that seemed to have continued until then. The tombs or shrines of St Birgitta, Catherine and Ingrid in Vadstena, St Nicholas in Linköping, St Sigfrid in Växjö, St Brynolf in Skara, St Helen in Skövde, St David in Munktorp, St Eskil in Strängnäs, St Holger in Skokloster, and St Ragnhild and St Botvid in Telje were all destroyed.[1329] Among the few shrines left untouched are the shrine of St Henrik in Nousiainen and the so-called St Hemming casket in Turku – perhaps forgotten because of their relatively peripheral location – and the new shrine of St Eric in Uppsala.

**Church Silver Confiscations**

Although the Reformation in Northern Europe and the ensuing confiscations of church silver are to blame for the loss of the majority of our ecclesiastic treasures, at least it created written documents of the lost treasures. This is particularly true in Sweden, where a rich documentation of the confiscations is preserved. Swedish and Finnish confiscations of church silver have been systematically analysed by O. Källström. As he points out, it was not only in these countries that the churches lost their properties to a secular authority: confiscations of silver from churches were also organised, for example, in Germany and Britain, both before and after the Nordic Reformation.[1330]

In Norway, the treasures of St Mary's Church in Oslo and Nidaros Cathedral were listed just before the Reformation, when they were transferred elsewhere for safekeeping – in both cases, the lists

[1328] Johnsen 1965, 154–155.

[1329] Werwing 1746, 294–295; Pirinen 1996, 32.

[1330] Källström 1939, 19–24.

survived but the treasures did not.[1331] Most church treasures, among them Nidaros' famously large shrines of St Olaf and St Eystein, were confiscated and their silver parts melted down for financial use in Denmark. The treasures of St Mary's Church in Oslo were apparently taken first to Akershus Castle in 1523, and later to Denmark in 1529 by the order of the Viceroy (later to become King Christian III).1332 In 1530, the Apostle church in Bergen lost a selection of reliquaries and other silver treasures that were taken to Copenhagen,1333 and the remaining ones in 1537.1334 One ship transporting Norwegian church silver to Copenhagen was seized by Dutch pirates in 1543, but the exact contents are not known.1335 Denmark, too, lost a large part of its catholic heritage during the Reformation, but unlike Sweden and Norway, even the lists of the confiscated objects are mostly lost.1336

In Sweden, the Reformation took place under King Gustav Vasa. He proclaimed himself head of the Swedish church, which would henceforth no longer be subordinate to the pope. Now in charge of the material belongings of the Church, the king ordered all "unnecessary" objects to be confiscated for the benefit of the kingdom's suffering economy. This meant confiscating silver and gold, which was especially needed to pay the kingdom's debts to the Hansa port of Lübeck. The king introduced a heavier taxation to the whole society for this purpose, but the most valuable objects – i.e. valuable metals and objects of artistic value – were found in the churches. What

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[1331] DN 08:528; Fett 1909, 145; Ekroll 2002, 63–94; Ekroll 2007, 195–200; Liepe 2015a, 75–100.

[1332] Johnsen 1965, 154.

[1333] Nicolaysen 1862–1866, 429.

[1334] *ingtet forryckes aff kalcke disk monstrantier clenodier guld siølff forgyltte taffuller och andit saadant hues som er eller findis vdi kircker och closter at thet bliffuer tilstede alt samenn vforrugkt,* DN 3:1147. On Norwegian confiscations, see also Gjessing 1918, 267–269.

[1335] DN 23:451, an inventory dated June 3, 1537 in Steinvikholms slott: "*Wdj tornett som kallis Bondhenn: Sancte Oluffs skrin som han liggher wdj, Sanctj Augustini skrin som er aff sølffuer, Ith helligdoms skrin som er aff kopper oc er forgillt, En Sancte Oluffs bolde som er aff træ oc er beslaghen met sølffuer*" –The third casket contained relics of St Bernhard, who Ekroll assumes was an early Bishop of Nidaros. Ekroll 2000; Ekroll 2001, 123–136; Ekroll 2002, 63.

[1336] For surviving Danish confiscation or inventory lists, albeit with no evident reliquaries, see Christiansen 1968, 197–198; Jensen 1922, 170–171.

mattered for the confiscators was the material value of the objects.[1337] Although the church reduction can be interpreted as reflecting the new, Lutheran views on church treasures, capitalising on holy objects in a moment of financial necessity was not exactly new – as we have already seen.[1338]

Gustav Vasa's bailiffs had help from Lutheran clerics and bishops in the confiscations. Almost all church utensils were judged unnecessary, and this was made easier by the more ascetic Lutheran idea of divine office.[1339] Chalices and patens still had a role in the Lutheran liturgy, but only the bare minimum was required. Some confiscation lists mention only what was left in the churches – usually only a few items. In a few cases, a chalice was brought from one church to another if one was missing. Fortunately, the king was only interested in objects made of silver, gold, and sometimes gilt copper, so this would have excluded some wood and textile objects, and those made of less valuable metals. If the less valuable objects were decorated with silver parts, they were stripped of them. Occasionally they were then forgotten about, and have survived to the present day.

It is not unusual that some churches were visited twice by the confiscators, as the need for silver was growing. It may also have been suspected that some items were hidden from the confiscators on the first visit.[1340] Before the beginning of the confiscations, according to the inventory of 26 August 1530, the Birgittine Abbey of Naantali had at least ten reliquaries among the 35 listed objects: a reliquary arm, four reliquaries made of black ostrich eggs with silver parts, two small, maybe wooden reliquaries with silver details, and three small wooden caskets with no silver.[1341] With the exception of the last three, one would expect them all to have been confiscated, though no actual confiscation lists from Naantali have survived. The only surviving document about the Naantali silver items is a receipt from

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[1337] Källström 1939, 13–19; see also Lahti 2006, 173–183.

[1338] Reutilisation of reliquaries and their materials, see Dierkens 1997, 251.

[1339] Källström 1939, 39.

[1340] Källström 1939, 76.

[1341] *Item en arm vog - viij lödige [mark] i lod minus; Item iiij små helgedoma kar met suarta strusegg beslagna met sölff. wogo - vj lödige [mark] tilhopa; Item ij små helgedoma skrin litet beslagna met sölff; Item än iij små skrin, som inthet beslagna våre.* FMU VIII, 330.

King Gustav Vasa to bailiff Simon Tomasson, stating that the king had received a collection of church silver from Naantali Abbey on July 17, 1554. Fortunately, the king's receipt mentions the items and their weights with the same precision as most of the confiscation lists. The document describes the lot as non-gilt silver from four reliquaries, weighing altogether a little more than one kilogram.[1342] Those were probably the four ostrich egg reliquaries. Naantali was visited again in 1554 by Bishop Mikael Agricola, who toured the churches on the South-West coast of Finland to establish a list of suitable items. The tour ended at Naantali at the end of July. There, unlike in the other churches of his tour, the bishop did not find any items worthy of confiscation.[1343]

In Sweden, the shrines of the nation's two patron saints, St Birgitta and St Eric, survived longer than most other reliquaries despite their high value in gilt silver. Gustav Vasa did not touch them, probably seeing their value for the nation, but King John III found himself in an economic predicament, indebted to Denmark and at war with Russia, and eventually the shrines were confiscated in 1572 and 1573 and melted into coins, after separating the gold from the silver. As Artur Bygdén has suggested, John III, who had a Catholic queen, was probably very unwilling to sacrifice the shrines, and may have promised to substitute them with new ones as soon as possible, as he commissioned the new shrine for St Eric in 1574 and the one for St Birgitta in 1580.[1344] There was still enough Catholic clergy to carry the new reliquary of St Eric in a procession to the now Lutheran cathedral.[1345]

There were protests against the confiscations: in Roskilde, the clerics wrote and asked the king to spare the relic and reliquary of St Lucius. It is uncertain if the letter had any effect, but the reliquary was taken, and the relic remained.[1346] In Sweden, when the Catholics protested, the king's secretary, reformist theologian Laurentius

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[1342] *oförgylt sölff, som hade sitt opå 4 heliedomekar, 4 löd. mark 14 lodh.* Almquist (ed.), Gustav Den Förstes Registratur, 371. See also Lahti 2006, 178–181.

[1343] Arwidsson VIII, 1856, 162–163.

[1344] Bygdén 1954, 350–360.

[1345] Lindgren 1983, 23–25; 65–99; Thordeman 1964, 13.

[1346] Liepe, forthcoming.

Andreae answered by accusing them of an ungodly lack of sympathy for the kingdom's common cause.[1347] Even the *topos* of reliquaries or relics miraculously expressing their disapproval was observed once more, when stories were told of pools of blood appearing to the empty places where the confiscated shrines of St Eric and St Birgitta had been.[1348]

In some churches, efforts were made to protect and hide the treasures from imminent confiscation.[1349] Certain churches already had some know-how of doing that, having faced the threat of pillagers.[1350] In Vadstena Abbey, a secret room had been prepared for the safekeeping of reliquaries and other valuable items already in 1442, and O. Källström suggests that some items may have escaped confiscation there.[1351] Nevertheless, Vadstena also suffered a theft in 1557: reliquaries with relics were stolen by two men in the midst of the period of confiscations.[1352] When the nuns were warned of a new, impending confiscation in 1595, they hid the bodies and relics of their saints. They also sent a large part of the abbey's belongings to be stored elsewhere, but they were not saved.[1353] According to O. Källström, Alvastra Abbey and Västra Tollstad were two churches that delivered so few silver items to the confiscators that a hiding operation is probable.[1354]

The Linköping treasure is the only remaining proof of a successful hiding operation. Bishop of Linköping, Hans Brask, arranged for the burial of a large selection of church silver items in a field in Linköping. That he succeeded in hiding the Linköping treasure is particularly fortunate, since the king already suspected him of

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[1347] Källström 1935, 14–15.

[1348] Bygdén 1954, 351.

[1349] Tarlow 2003, 108–121.

[1350] Van Os 2000, 179.

[1351] DV 523; Källström 1935, 19–20.

[1352] Silfverstolpe 1895–1898, 198; Bygdén – Gejvall – Hjortsjö 1954, 70.

[1353] Werwing 1746, 290–291: *"Emedlertid undangiömde och Nunnorne S. Brittas, S. Karins och S. Ingrids, tillika med åtskillige fleres ben hemma uti deras hus, sedan de hade dem framtagit utur de kostbare silfwerskrin och Lådor, hwaruti de hade warit förwarade."* However, relics of St Birgitta were again displayed in Vadstena during Queen Kristina's visit in 1643; see Zachrisson 2017, 140.

[1354] Källström 1935, 20.

attempting to do this.[1355] Thanks to him, the "Linköping hoard" is now known for containing an exceptional number of surviving reliquaries and other medieval church items. Not all of this treasure is likely to have come from Linköping Cathedral, but the bishop was clearly trying to save the most valuable Catholic items from all the churches he had contact with.[1356]

Church treasures were also taken abroad. That was planned to be the second step in Bishop Brask's saving operation before leaving the country in 1527: he collected as many gold and silver items as possible during his visitation tour, which ended in a boat taking him from Gotland to Gdansk.[1357] Already in 1526, the Bishop of Uppsala had left for Gdansk, possibly taking some of the Uppsala Cathedral's treasures with him.[1358] The fates of those items are not known, and there is no list of them. Ten years later, in Nidaros, after trying in vain to resist King Christian III's project of bringing the Reformation to Norway, Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson took a selection of church treasures out of the country in 1537 and brought them to Brussels. According to a list made in 1548, those two large wooden coffins contained many valuable textile and metal objects, at least one gilt reliquary casket and several crosses and silver images of saints, some of them possibly reliquaries.[1359] His predecessor Archbishop Erik Walkendorf was sent into exile already in 1521; he brought a selection of his personal possessions to the Carthusian Abbey of Amsterdam, but the only reliquary among them was a cross containing unidentified relics.[1360]

What happened to the confiscated items? In Denmark, most of the church silver was melted down to make money. In Sweden, the same must have happened, and many silver treasures from Swedish and Finnish churches also seem to have ended up in Germany as payments of war debts to the Hansa towns or as a dowry for King Gustav's daughters. None of them have been found again, and even if

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[1355] Källström 1939, 153; 213; 227.
[1356] Collijn 1919, 22; Mörkfors 1987, 46–57.
[1357] Källström 1939, 78–79.
[1358] Källström 1939, 278.
[1359] *Een kistken. alst schynt vergult mit hellichdom,* DN 5:1118 (a list of those items written in Brussels in 1548).
[1360] DN 7:604.

some still existed, it would be difficult to identify them now. In rare cases, items have survived in exile and returned, such as the reliquaries from Vadstena that were first taken to Poland by King Sigismund and later brought back to Sweden by King Charles X in 1656.[1361] Meanwhile, the relics that survived without their reliquaries lost their visual and hagiographic identity. They became anonymous bones and finally museum objects, ancient remnants of a distant culture.

**From Churches to Museums**

Although the cult of saints became forbidden, some local cults continued until the 19th century. In some churches, images of saints were refashioned to represent biblical figures,[1362] while in others, sculptures were adorned with precious robes, pilgrimages and feasts were organised and miracles were experienced in spite of the official dogma. Meanwhile, St Henrik was still venerated in the Turku diocese as its founder and patron saint, as we can see from the use of his finger on the signet image. Right up until the 19th century, images of the bishop and places connected to him continued to be regarded as objects of respect and cult – and probably as representations of his presence.[1363]

Even some reliquary shrines stayed in their places. The display of relics or reliquaries on altars is still mentioned in sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documents. St Birgitta's skull was reportedly placed on the main altar for healing purposes in Vadstena even after the Reformation.[1364] The shrine of St Karlung, with his relics in it, was still venerated in Karlskyrka, Uppland, until the archbishop Laurentius Paulinus Gothus discovered this during a visit in 1641 and ordered that the relics be burned. Even after that, the shrine continued to exist for at least thirty more years. An enamelled reliquary casket – of a saint not identified by any remaining sources –

[1361] Estham 1991, 30. Since 1703 they belong to the Historical museum in Stockholm.
[1362] See e.g. Fredriksen 1983, 17–29.
[1363] See e.g. Edgren 1993, 45; Pirinen 1996, 96–98; Lahti 2007, 70–86; Heikkilä 2016, 248–251. On the changes in medieval wooden sculptures in Finnish churches, see Räsänen 2016, 254–263.
[1364] Bygdén–Gejvall–Hjortsjö 1954, 71.

still stood on the high altar in Spånga church, near Stockholm, until at least 1682, and a similar one was on the high altar of Trönö church, Hälsingland, until the 18th century.[1365] In Jäla church, a reliquary casket was preserved in the church until 1755, which must have been at least partly due to the local tradition that it was a donation from St Birgitta, who had promised the casket would protect the church (or the community) against enemies. A similar casket stayed in nearby Eriksberg church until the 1870s, albeit stripped of its relics in the 18th century, and it was believed to protect local agriculture. Those cases were signs of local resistance to the complete abandonment of the saints, but also of a mixture of lay belief, superstition and respect for these ancient objects.[1366]

Gradually, the memory and knowledge of their history in the churches was waning, and the original functions or identities of reliquaries were no longer recognised. They became curiosities – remains of something exotic – or then something irrelevant, useless old objects that at best could be repurposed. In Uppsala Cathedral, when an enamelled reliquary casket was no longer viewed as a holy object, it was apparently used to store money.[1367] In the 18 th century, many churches sold some of their medieval treasures. One of the embroidered Vadstena pyxes lost its gilt silver parts in Linköping, when the Cathedral council decided to sell them,[1368] and the Cathderal of Odense auctioned off gilt copper plates that were possibly removed from the two saints' shrines.[1369] The triumphal crucifix of Roskilde Cathedral was sold to a person who saw it as mere firewood.[1370]

Even after the reliquaries were gone, the lingering visual memory of their awe-inspiring presence on top of altars developed into new interpretations in folklore, as seen in the anecdote on the medieval traditions in Roskilde Cathedral: the memory of two wooden head reliquaries venerated on the altar became a story of two wooden

[1365] Thordeman 1964, 13–14; 89.; Zachrisson 2017, 142–145.
[1366] Zachrisson 2017, 140–142.
[1367] Bengtsson 2010, 146.
[1368] Nisbeth & Estham 2001, 128–131; Källström 2011, 117–116; 146; Lindqvist Sandgren 2018, 48.
[1369] Vellev 1986, 153.
[1370] Nyborg 2003, 160–195.

heads nodding to confirm the confession and absolving of sins.[1371] From the Lutheran point of view, both the relics and confession were now perceived as sacrilegious (even pagan) elements fit to distinguish a cultural distance between the past and present.

The shifting attitudes were visible in the changing church space. Many of the medieval wall paintings were tolerated in the 16th and 17th centuries, but hidden under white paint after that. The 18th century cast medieval images in a bad light, but by the 19th this was replaced by a national-romantic admiration of the medieval and particularly Gothic tradition.

During the 19th century, medieval church interiors and objects were intensely studied and collected, and national museums were established on the basis of these collections. At this point, the transfer of medieval sculptures from churches often had the character of a rescue operation, as some of the churches were facing demolition or massive renovations that left no safe place for the ancient objects; abandoned medieval sculptures could still be viewed as firewood. Eventually, new displays of medieval sculptures in the museums contributed to the increasing appreciation of their artistic and historical value.[1372] Fewer reliquaries were available for exhibitions or research, and as a result, they have gained less attention than other preserved medieval items such as paintings, sculptures, chalices and crosses, the use of which was more familiar to Lutheran practice.

The transition of former cult objects and holy images to museums, where they are seen as exotic or aesthetic commodities is problematic, however, and has been much discussed in art history and museology. [1373] This transition has taken place in contemporary Catholic cultures as well – relics and reliquaries can be found both in cult use and in museum displays. Alain Dierkens sums up the musealisation of most reliquaries: we admire the artwork and study

[1371] DK, Roskilde, p. 1657.

[1372] Jensen 1922, 200–204; Thordeman 1964, 15–61. See also e.g. Nyborg 2003, 160–195.

[1373] On reliquaries in contemporary Nordic museum diplays, see particularly Liepe 2017, 625–628. See also Appadurai 1986, 26–27 ("-- the Western taste for the things of the past and of the other").

the message of the iconography, but the sacredness is mostly gone.[1374] What makes the sacred disappear in the museum context is related to the space and the intentions of the display as well as the audience, but also, as Michael Camille comments, the lack of use and movement. Winged altarpieces, for instance, were opened on feast days or Sundays.

> "It is this ever-changing repertoire which made the experience of such altarpieces quite different from their display in the modern museum, where everything is made visible and thus transformation impossible."[1375]

The same transformation is missing in the reliquaries on display in a museum; the audience never gets to see them brought to the altar or carried in a procession, let alone touch them or spend the night praying beneath them – which, admittedly, few museum visitors would be willing to do these days. Instead of participating in feast days in candlelight, we can see them, brightly lit, at any time during the museum's opening hours; we are separated from them by the glass of their display case, in which we see our own reflection[1376]. As frustrating as that reflection may be, one could ask whether that is the price we must pay for knowing that the fragile ancient objects are now physically safe. Besides, if the holy presence of relics is considered to function by contagion, as it is, the reliquaries have inevitably become relics as well. Thus the transparent vitrine, in turn, becomes a new layer of protection and display – a new reliquary.

The scepticism towards museums being suitable sites for displaying medieval artefacts is not new. In 1910, the Swedish art historian Sigurd Curman argued that they "ought still to be able to live a long and enriching life in their old churches" instead of being "confined to museum collections". Church treasures were only

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[1374] "On admire l'oeuvre d'art, on étudie le message fourni par l'iconographie; mais le sacré a presque toujours disparu.", Dierkens 1997, 252.

[1375] Camille 1996, 124.

[1376] The notion of our reflection in the glass is borrowed from Didi-Huberman 1990, 64, where he also laments this "tyranny of visibility". The reflection can also be a reminder for us to recognise our own biased viewpoint, as I have argued in Lahti 2011, 31.

transferred to museums for protection, in other words, if their physical condition or the conditions of the church space itself would not endure continued display or storage in the church.[1377] Even today, there is no simple solution; many medieval artworks – particularly wooden sculptures – are deteriorating in poor conditions in churches or in poorly maintained church museums, as some art historians have pointed out. Medieval reliquaries have also been stolen and damaged in fires while kept in churches. In some churches, replicas of the sculptures or reliquaries are on display, while the originals are preserved in museums.[1378] Nevertheless, in a Nordic medieval church today, even if the conditions for preservation and display of reliquaries may be impeccable, there are less options for display arrangements than in a museum, and the church space now contains various elements from different periods, having typically undergone several changes since the Middle Ages. Relics and reliquaries are thus never presented in a perfectly medieval setting, but in a multi-layered composite of visual and cultural continuity. Despite all these changes, as Liepe has argued, they still manage to reach out to the 21st-century audiences with message of human presence[1379].

The way reliquaries and other medieval church objects have been displayed in cultural-historical museums has ranged from neutrally white spaces to dim rooms designed to replicate some of the atmosphere of a medieval church, using lights, materials, colours, and music. Reliquaries have received special attention in thematic exhibitions, too. In Stockholm, an exhibition of relics and reliquaries from Swedish churches was arranged for the Swedish History Museum in 1951, and a selection of relics of St Birgitta was assembled from several countries in an exhibition celebrating her 600th anniversary in Stockholm in 1973.[1380] In Norway, the first exhibition of

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[1377] Thordeman 1964, 84.

[1378] Lindblom 1963, 32; Blindheim 1988, 16–18; Tegnér 1999, 200–202; see also Vuola 2016. -The reliquary casket in Ullånger church in Sweden was stolen in 1999 and discovered after some years in Spain, from where it was returned to the church in 2011.

[1379] Liepe 2017, 628.

[1380] Thordeman – Källström – Rydbeck 1951, *passim*; Andersson & Franzén 1975. For a recent analysis of the displays of medieval church art in Swedish museums, see Liepe 2018.

medieval art and craft was arranged in 1922. Being devoted to the art of the silversmith, it included some of the remaining silver reliquaries (mainly caskets) from Norway and Denmark. The silver collections of all Norwegian medieval churches had not been examined at this stage, but there was an awareness of how much had been lost during the confiscations of the 16th century. In the catalogue, the curator-researcher Thor Kielland refers to the list of objects confiscated for King Christian II of Denmark from St Mary's Church in Nidaros, and admits that reading the list, one feels almost bitter to know how much there once was, even if the remaining items are of high quality.[1381] As a consequence of the long union of the two countries, many Norwegian church treasures have also ended up in Danish churches and museums.

Relics that had lost their reliquaries and thus their visual identity have ended up safe, but mostly ignored, in historical or cultural-historical collections, or then restored to the Catholic communities. In Finland, the National Board of Antiquities (now Finnish Heritage Agency) has been the warden of a large amount of catholic religious heritage, including practically all the remaining medieval relics removed from Turku Cathedral during its restoration in the 1930s. In the 1990s, a new interest in relics sparked off a discussion on the legitimacy of the NBA to be keeping them. One of the smaller Turku relics, tagged as a fragment of St Henrik's arm bone, was much debated in the media, when both the Catholic St Henrik's Cathedral in Helsinki and the Lutheran Turku Cathedral wished to have it. In 2000, the fragment was eventually placed in the altar of the Catholic St Henrik's, so it could be venerated as a relic of the church's patron saint. This met with complaints from representatives of Turku Cathedral, who argued that the relic belonged to where it had been found. Two main arguments were presented for returning the relic to Turku: either it was part of the cathedral's history and belonged to the cathedral museum, or it was a part of a dead man's body that deserved to be buried according to Lutheran practice.[1382] From the Catholic point of view, neither of these was the case: although the

[1381] Kielland 1922, 8–9.

[1382] A summary of the discussion in Lahti 2007, 81–82; see also Heikkilä 2016, 250.

status of relics in the Catholic tradition has undergone many changes since the early Christianity, they are still holy objects, material elements of religion, and belong inside or on top of an altar.[1383] The decision of depositing the relic in a Catholic church was in tune with the solutions regarding two other Nordic patrons' relics, the skull relic of St Lucius in Roskilde and the presumed arm bone of St Olaf in Oslo: both were placed in Catholic churches (already in 1862 and 1908 respectively), and a new reliquary was commissioned for each (although the arm's original reliquary still exists in the Danish National Museum, as we have seen above).

In June 2006, the NBA made a new decision to return the arm fragment and all the other relics back to Turku. The decision of moving the relics was commented on in internet forums as well. These comments reveal something of the meaning of the saint and his relics to 21st century Finns, whether they are Catholic, Lutheran or non-Christian. Putting the relics in a museum and a non-Catholic church was criticised, but some commentators thought Turku Cathedral would be the best place for all Finns, irrespective of their religion, to venerate them. There were also suggestions that the relics be divided between the Catholic Cathedral, Turku Cathedral and the church at Nousiainen. Finally, there were those for whom the relics and St Henrik were insignificant or didn't make any sense.[1384] However, when the relics were returned to Turku, they were not returned to their original setting in the cathedral, but placed in the cathedral museum. In the Lutheran cathedral, they are part of the history and self-understanding of the church, and simultaneously its "profane" possessions, objects of value, adding interest to the church as an insight into the Middle Ages in Finland.

Meanwhile, an archaeological research project intent on dating the Turku relics and reliquaries was started in 2007 in the University of Turku. This project is part of a long vein of scientific interest in the technical or material analysis of relics. Now the relics are handled with cotton or plastic gloves in laboratories, with a reverence more for their material fragility and old age than their sacredness. Dating projects for

[1383] Angenendt 1997, 165–182; 311.
[1384] Lahti 2007, 82.

relics have been going on for several decades now, and new techniques have inspired researchers to return to the same relics several times. In recent years, the *tibia* of St Olaf in Oslo, St Eric's bones in Uppsala, the bones from St Birgitta's Shrine in Vadstena, and the relics possibly related to St Henrik in Turku Cathedral have all been analysed.[1385]

A new curiosity towards relics and reliquaries and the cultural phenomena related to them has sparked research such as the dating projects mentioned above, and thematic historical investigations such as the historian Marika Räsänen's project *Touching, Tasting, Hearing, Seeing and Smelling. Sensory Experiences in the Feasts of St Thomas Aquinas*. There has also been a spate of recent exhibitions, such as one on Finnish pilgrimages in the Middle Ages, at the Vapriikki museum in Tampere (2014); and on the relics of St Sunniva, in Bergen (2011). For the Bergen exhibition, the reliquary casket of St Sunniva was reconstructed, and a relic procession was reenacted, in collaboration with the local Lutheran and Catholic churches.[1386]

My final note on the later life of reliquaries concerns a new role given to a medieval reliquary as an emblem of local identity. In Norwegian Sør-Aurdal municipality, the reliquary casket of Hedal Church – a typical example of the Norwegian gilt copper caskets with dragon heads – is still on display in the Hedal church. Since 1990, it has featured in the municipal coat of arms. According to the website for the municipal administration, it also symbolises the two local stave churches.[1387] In this context, the local material identity of the object becomes its essential characteristic, overriding its ideological roots in a worldwide religious culture that was abandoned in the region centuries ago.

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[1385] See e.g. Bygdén–Gejvall–Hjortsjö 1954, 14–31; Nilsson – Possnert – Edlund – Budowle –Kjellström – Allen 2010; Taavitsainen – Oinonen – Possnert 2015, 308–322; Morten 2013, 25–49; Sten et al. 2016.

[1386] A news article on the event: http://www.efremforlag.no/efremforlag/vedlegg/Sunnivaskrinet_VL07092011.pdf; images of the reconstructed casket in procession: https://selje.kommune.no/portal-opplev-selje/opninga-av-utstillinga-sankta-sunniva-og-det-heilage-skrinet.aspx (cited 13.3.2016)

[1387] https://www.sor-aurdal.kommune.no/toppmeny/sor-aurdal/om-sor-aurdal/kommunevapen/ (cited 19.2.2019)

Reformation caused the disappearance of nearly all gold and silver reliquaries from the Nordic churches, but it also produced written documentation of the confiscated treasures. At the same time, it also contributed to the surviving reliquaries' loss of identity, when many were hidden, forgotten or sold and thus detached from their original contexts. The few reliquaries of known provenience have proved to be of great local importance, while the other, now anonymous reliquaries have become museal treasures, admired and studied for the sake of their visual, material, and religious values, and gradually better understood through new insights gained by research.

# CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the existing and lost medieval reliquaries in the Nordic countries, with a particular focus on body-part reliquaries. My main question concerned the medieval perception of reliquaries, taking into account its visual and social aspects. This meant investigating (i) what people saw when they looked at reliquaries, their actual design and visuality and (ii) how this perception was reflected in the ways reliquaries were spoken of, treated, and interacted with. In order to do this, it was necessary to gather and systematically study all the available information on surviving and lost reliquaries.

It is important to recall that the vast majority of the reliquaries that once existed in this region are lost, even though examples of most types survive. While scholarly attention has focused on these remaining examples, *lost* reliquaries have received little if any attention. In this thesis, many of these lost items are recognised and discussed for the first time on the basis of medieval written records that describe or mention them.

In this work, reliquaries were studied as artefacts and artworks made by skilled craftsmen, but also as agents involved in social interaction and sacred objects imbued with the presence of saints. The way reliquaries were perceived in the Middle Ages was a result of various tangible and intangible dimensions: their constituent materials, shape, iconography, where they were situated in a church, other significant visual elements around them, and the reliquary's relationship to the holy relics it contained. In addition, the existence of each reliquary was shaped by its contact with people, both individuals and communities, in various situations and stages of its "life", from its commissioning and making; to its roles in the cult; and finally to its destruction, disappearance, or disposal. The medieval documents reveal how reliquaries were envisioned, remembered, admired, or confiscated.

This thesis presents several contributions to the existing scholarship on medieval reliquaries: it provides the first comprehensive view of all the medieval reliquaries in the Nordic countries; it offers a new reading of several medieval objects, texts and images from the perspective of their association or identification with

reliquaries; and proposes a theoretical reconstruction of several lost items on the basis of textual evidence. In what follows, I will present my main findings, organised in three sets of conclusions.

A first set of conclusions concerns the source material. The first thing to note is its scarcity. Both extant reliquaries and surviving written documents about reliquaries in the Nordic countries are few, and medieval images depicting reliquaries are even fewer. In many cases, however, it was possible to rediscover references to reliquaries that have been "hidden" in written documents. Based on the amount of lost reliquaries I found in the written documents (over 400) and the surviving reliquaries (circa 200), and the thousands of existing churches, I estimate that the number of reliquaries in Nordic countries during the Middle Ages must have amounted to over six thousand. Hence, many have disappeared without a trace. I have underlined the volatile nature of these estimates: the discovery of one, previously unknown detailed list of reliquaries of a Nordic cathedral, for instance, could change the estimates significantly.

A particular feature of the source material is that those artefacts and images that have remained hardly ever appear in the surviving written documents, and vice versa: most reliquaries mentioned in the medieval wills, letters, lists or other textual fragments are no longer to be found. This is an unlucky coincidence and typical for medieval material; all existing reliquaries must once have been mentioned in one or more documents, and there is no reason to doubt that most reliquaries mentioned in lists, wills, or account books did exist. Saints' *vitae* or miracle collections, of course, may contain more idealised or indeed fictional descriptions of reliquaries, but even those seem not to be entirely unrelated to existing reliquaries.

Yet another, decisive aspect of the source material is its uneven and arbitrary quality. Only few of the extant reliquaries can be attributed to a specific saint's cult or even a specific church or town. Though they have survived, the objects have become partly or entirely anonymous. As for the written sources, each of them typically provides only fragmentary information on a reliquary. The kinds of information gained from each source vary greatly, and it has not been possible to make exact comparisons between reliquaries. The available information on one reliquary may concern its commissioner, while the only thing known about another might be the material it was made

out of, or its shape. The sources do not yield detailed histories of individual objects, but they can be used to further our understanding of the history of reliquaries in the Nordic countries.

In economic transactions – such as when a reliquary was commissioned, bought, bequeathed, repaired or confiscated – it was usually spoken of in terms of its material value rather than as a holy object with significant content and visual details. In wills, reliquaries are also mentioned as material belongings being bequeathed to others, but something is also revealed of the personal meanings or practices related to privately owned reliquaries. In accounts directly related to the cult, particularly to the ceremonies of *translatio*, visual details, liturgical practices and even viewers' attitudes towards the reliquaries can be described. In miracle accounts, often concerning the *inventio* (discovery) of a relic, the possible existence or appearance of a reliquary may be understood as implicit in the description of the relic. These limitations have necessarily conditioned the methodological approach in this thesis. Thus the source material could only be approached on the basis of the available fragments of information rather than examining all the reliquaries equally through the same criteria.

The language and terminology used in these medieval Nordic sources is a mixture of Latin and the Nordic languages. Nearly all the terms used thus have several alternative meanings, which required careful interpretation and discussion throughout the work. These exegetical challenges were the result of four kinds of ambiguities: (i) frequently used reliquary terms that can refer to various different types of reliquaries, such as *kar* or *skrin*; (ii) words that may refer to reliquaries or to relics, such as *caput*; (iii) words that refer to reliquaries but are unusual or incorrect in the context and unclear as to the type of reliquary – a *cistula*, for instance, had not previously been interpreted correctly due to its mistaken transcription as *astula*; and (iv) words denoting objects some of which were reliquaries, others not, such as 'cross', 'monstrance', or 'image'. The terminology also depends on the different perspectives inherent in the kind of text it appears in: such as a medieval will, miracle collection, letter, or confiscation list. Yet, as I have shown, a careful reading of the available fragments of information can yield new interpretations and discoveries.

A second set of conclusions pertains to the design of reliquaries and how their shapes and iconography were related to the relics they contained. Often a connection of meaning between the content and the exterior shape or imagery could be established, but it was not always obvious. A reliquary could contain from one to dozens of relics and be commonly known as the reliquary of one specific saint, while it was also understood as representing the wider community of saints through the physical presence of each relic or the visual presence of several saints depicted on its exterior. In certain cases, a relic and its reliquary were perceived as inseparable, in others not. In the cult context, head and arm-shaped reliquaries in particular were habitually referred to as the head or arm of a specific saint.

In Nordic reliquaries, there are at least four kinds of visual reference to the relics it hosted. The most obvious is sculptural: the reliquary can be shaped to depict a certain saint, thereby implying that it contains the saint's relics, or a certain body part. A second type of reference is illustrative – whether painted, carved, or sculpted onto the surface of the reliquary – and depicts one or more saints or narrative scenes from a legend or makes an indirect, symbolic allusion. The third is textual, either listing the relics or addressing the saints. Finally, rather than merely implied or stated, the relics and their written labels can be displayed through a window or in an entirely transparent container, in which case the relic becomes a visual element in the artefact, contrasting the organic fragmentariness of human remains (in the case of body relics) with the sophisticated craftsmanship and (often) glossy materials of the reliquary. In such monstrance reliquaries, the relic is framed by the reliquary, conveying an explicit message about its own presence. Generally those visual references indicate only one saint – the one to whom the reliquary is attributed – although, as mentioned above, the actual contents may consist of the relics of several different saints. However, all these direct visual or textual references are rare: most reliquaries – both extant and lost – lack any design details linking them to specific saints. Instead, most reliquaries do express their function as containers of holy matter by means of varied combinations of valuable, shining or transparent materials, elaborate shapes and details, or simple but eloquent shapes such as chapels or crosses.

Most reliquaries are figurative and "speak" in one way or another. They represent churches or chapels, purses, crosses, boats, saints, heads, and arms. Among the sculptural reliquaries, popular figures are the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene, as well as patron saints of altars, usually containing their relics among others; this connection to a specific altar seems to have been more important for the identity of a sculptural reliquary than the relation to the relics within. Another popular shape is the cross, particularly in personally worn pectoral reliquaries, but also in altar or processional crosses, although not all of them were reliquaries. Of those cross reliquaries with listed contents, the majority – but not all – contained relics of the True Cross, sometimes together with other relics of Christ and other saints.

In illustrated reliquaries as well, some correlation between the reliquary and its contents can usually be found. The iconography in the earliest reliquaries – such as the chapel-shaped shrines, or the so-called St Olaf's arm – is dominated by references to Christ, Mary, and the apostles or Evangelists. They underline the meaning of the church and the saints as a holy community rather than the importance of an individual saint. The primary task of the reliquary was not to express its particular contents, but to remind the viewer of the higher context of relics. Yet, the relics inside were registered and known. A casket could contain the entire body of a local patron saint – the centre of the community – or a multitude of small relics that each brought the entire presence of the saints they represented. On late medieval reliquaries, individual and local saints were increasingly visually represented. Particularly in the cases where only one saint was depicted, the illustration could be taken as a declaration of the reliquary's primary identity. Among the existing objects, an obvious example would be the shrine of St Henrik in Nousiainen, illustrated with scenes of his legend and even an image of the shrine itself.

Textual references to saints or relics are less common than images on Nordic reliquaries, but examples can be found among those still extant; in medieval documents, such details were seldom mentioned. The texts represent two different approaches to the contents: they are written to announce the relics to the viewer, or to address them (or the represented saint) in prayer. Among the existing reliquaries, two chapel-shaped reliquaries from Jäla and Eriksberga have lists of relics inscribed on their exterior surface, whereas the text referring to the

head of a companion of St Gereon is hidden under the lid of an embroidered pyx. St Henrik is addressed by a prayer written on his shrine, and prayers to St Birgitta and St Eskil are written on their silver hands. The texts, like the images, were relatively small and thus mainly for the eyes of the clerics, who were the only ones who could take the reliquaries in their hands. However, the clerics could also read these texts aloud to laypeople or tell them about the images and relics inside.

Medieval lists of reliquaries also reveal a correlation between their iconography and contents, but the relic directly related to the images was not necessarily the first one on the list – even in the case of Marian relics, which would have been high up in the hierarchy. However, some reliquaries did not contain any relics related to their described visual motifs. In the case of empty reliquaries, the relation with the relics is unknown. This is indeed the case with the majority of extant Nordic reliquaries; they can only be examined from the point of view of the visual references, as the relics in most cases are either lost or anonymous.

I also discussed items that were designed to contain relics without being primarily perceived or intended as reliquaries, suggesting that they should be classified as secondary reliquaries. These include wooden sculptures and altarpieces with small, often hidden niches for relics. In contemporary research, certain other items have also been classified as reliquaries based on the existence of cavities that seemed to have been meant to contain relics. The definition of an existing item's primary function is not always evident, but it could be compared to how similar items were described or classified in the extant medieval documents. I challenged some of these classifications, which led to re-identifying items such as pax and portable altars. The result is a new understanding of how those items were used in the medieval liturgy.

Body-part reliquaries, shaped as hands or heads, are discussed in Part II. Although they were never the most common type among Nordic reliquaries, I found indications of over fifty possible head reliquaries and over thirty arm reliquaries. Head and hand reliquaries were not simply shaped to "speak their contents", which was the earlier academic interpretation; they could also contain other relics apart from parts of skulls or hands. Yet, they were "speaking", in a

specific sense: heads and arms were used in a more active way than other reliquaries – they participated in rituals and were involved in a physical contact with the congregation. Written testimonies of this exist from medieval Europe, but post-medieval anecdotes seem to carry the memory of similar experiences witnessed in the North. Holy heads, for instance, were remembered as singing in the Esrum Abbey and nodding in Roskilde Cathedral.

The surviving Nordic body-part reliquaries consist of four arm reliquaries and three head reliquaries. They do not differ in any striking stylistic or iconographic aspects from those elsewhere in Europe; in fact, at least two of them seem to have been made in the Cologne area, while others have clear signs of European influence. I argue that their shape and details contain clues as to how their identities and functions could vary according to individual commissions and uses. Due to the fragmentary nature of the information available about each reliquary, new discoveries concerning them vary as well. The Nordic written documents confirm the idea that arm reliquaries can, however, include arm relics of the saint in question and usually are designed to imply that, but they can also include other relics, and other saints, and still legitimately represent the named saint's arm. Equally, relics of arms can be kept in reliquaries that are not arm-shaped.

In general, reliquaries were flexible in their capacity of representing the sacred bodies, both visually and symbolically. As I have shown in the case of the "Arm of the 10,000 Knights", a reliquary can transform a relic beyond its original anatomy if necessary: when a leg bone is placed in an arm-shaped reliquary and redefined as a relic of a saint's hand, it will become a saint's hand. And in that new hand, the whole saint or community of saints (in this case, thousands of saints) is present. At the same time, the relic seems to transform the reliquary: The arm reliquary does not look particularly knightly – it is neither armoured, nor holding a sword – but its contents, the relic of one of the 10,000 Knights, and the coat of arms of its commissioner give it an aura of military power.

Meanwhile, the enamelled arm reliquary in the Danish National Museum experienced a radical change of identity after being removed from its original context. It was probably made for an episcopal saint in Germany and contains a strong Christological theme, but received

an entirely new identity and reputation as "the arm of St Olaf" at the time of its inclusion in the museum collections of the eighteenth century (if not earlier). However, unlike these two arms, most arm reliquaries mentioned in medieval documents belonged to the cults of local saints, which would explain their popularity and availability. Regarding the arm reliquaries of St Birgitta and St Eskil, I focus on the inscriptions on their silver surfaces, seeking to clarify the texts' connection to the devotional traditions of the respective saints and arguing that the act of prayer was essential to their functions as reliquaries.

As for the medieval head reliquaries, written documents indicate that head-shaped reliquaries could also include other relics than skulls, and that skull relics were kept in various types of reliquaries. Nevertheless, the association between head reliquaries and skull relics still seems to be quite strong. Many of the lost Nordic head reliquaries were dedicated to local saints and probably locally made, but some also arrived as gifts or were purchased abroad. A remarkable number of busts and silk skull reliquaries were produced for the 11,000 Virgins in Cologne, and several such busts seem to have existed in Nordic churches, too.

Only three head reliquaries survive in the North: the wooden bust of a crowned female saint in Sigtuna, and the two constructed silk skull reliquaries in Turku. I suggest that they were all, in one way or another, related to the cult of St Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins, and that they all also gained particular local meanings and identities during or after the Middle Ages. An unusual case, even internationally, is the embroidered skull reliquary from Turku, in which the theme of the head is represented both in the constructed shape imitating a skull and a hagiographic embroidery of a *martyrium* by beheading.

Thus I argue that no reliquary was created as a mere reference to its contents. Instead, the perceived meanings of a reliquary were a result of various factors including its shape, materials, size and iconography, its functions and uses in the local tradition, the relics and what was known about them, and the intentions of its commissioner, maker, and users. How the combination of these factors played out and which of them became dominant for the

perception of the reliquary during any particular period of its existence was different for each reliquary.

The third set of conclusions concerns the ways reliquaries were perceived and treated. From the remaining medieval written sources, I was able to reconstruct a general picture of their material and social life span in the Nordic countries. In order to understand their roles and functions in the lives of medieval rulers, clerics and laypeople, I investigated how reliquaries were purchased, used, displayed and spoken of in the medieval North. There may not be enough information to write the entire biography of any individual reliquary, but instead, an overarching narrative is possible, offering glimpses into different moments in the lives of reliquaries through discovered references to their commission, construction, acquisition, import, donation, repair, theft, and confiscation. Some of the medieval sources also indicate the reliquaries' possible locations during moments of storage and display. Also their sensory and emotional effect on their viewers may be gleaned particularly from the accounts concerning liturgical celebrations and miracles.

Although relic cults and pilgrimages were in many ways beneficial for the church, the official stand, repeated throughout the whole medieval period, was that laity should not own or even touch relics and reliquaries. As numerous sources show, this rule was constantly defied. Traces of venerating touch are also visible on the surfaces of some of the surviving reliquaries. They were displayed on altars and carried in processions during festivals, such as translations, and annual celebrations like the *festum reliquiarum*.

The encounters, particularly on feast days, were accompanied by songs of praise and scents of incense. Candlelight or daylight was reflected in the polished surfaces of metal reliquaries. In certain churches, clerics recited the names and contents of the reliquaries that were carried both in and outside the church or installed on altars for display in a specific order; when this ceremony was repeated in several feasts every year, the local community became familiar with its heavenly patrons and treasures. Laypeople expressed their gratitude for answered prayers by bringing silver or wax votives that were hanged on the local saint's shrine or nearby, but the strongest emotional or sensory experiences were reported by clerics, who naturally had more immediate access to reliquaries. Holy heads (in

head reliquaries) of some of the Eleven thousand Virgins caused a lovely emotion in the heart of a monk carrying them, and other such heads were heard joining clerics in a song.

Reliquaries were expensive items, and churches needed to raise funds particularly if they wanted to commission a large shrine for a local saint. Best available craftsmen were employed to create new reliquaries of gold, silver and precious stones, elaborately sculpted and painted wood, or possibly exotic materials such as ivory, ostrich egg, or coconut. However, the written records seldom praise the makers for their skill – they are mostly mentioned in documents registering the money and time required for their work to be completed. When funds permitted, older reliquaries were also improved or replaced by new ones; the old reliquary could then be incorporated in the new structure or repurposed for other relics. During times of extraordinary hardship, churches were sometimes even forced to pawn or sell some of their golden or silver reliquaries.

It was also rather common for churches to receive reliquaries as donations. Smaller ones were often bequeathed to churches by clerics or wealthy laypeople, for whom they had once been personal tools of devotion. Relics and reliquaries could also be instruments of power in political and ecclesiastic relationships, and donating a reliquary to a church could be a tool for gaining personal status or ensuring a burial place and memorial service in a given church. This dimension gained a visual expression when the emblems of wealthy worshippers appeared on reliquaries. One example is the first shrine made for St Birgitta, dotted with silver badges bearing the coats of arms of the families that had sponsored her canonisation process. The commissioner or owner of the arm reliquary of the Ten Thousand Knights had his coat of arms painted on it, while bishop Magnus Tawast had himself portrayed in one of the image plates on the tomb of St Henrik.

The Protestant Reformation removed relics and reliquaries from their central place in the Christian liturgy – shoving some into oblivion in hidden niches and coffins, and melting down others for the repayment of debts. Nevertheless, in a few places – such as Karlskyrka, Sweden – the cult and the reliquaries resisted longer. For centuries after the Reformation, the surviving reliquaries gradually gained the third 'historical status' of antiquities that were to be

protected, studied and displayed to the public, valued for their craftsmanship and for their historical or cultural meanings. However, many of the surviving reliquaries have lost their original identities, and their provenance is now unknown. In some cases, this has led to their being misunderstood, re-interpreted and associated to quite different saints and histories than what their background really was; this seems to have happened, for instance, with the so-called Arm of St Olaf.

Reliquaries could thus be perceived as both holy, miraculous objects, and highly prestigious artefacts; they were the treasures of churches, and, if their life span was long enough, also historical and museal treasures. In contemporary churches and museums, where reliquaries are on display, the notion of their original sacredness is mixed with an approach of curiosity and admiration for medieval visual culture. At the same time as representing a worldwide religious phenomenon, they are also tokens of local history. One fortunate example of this is the chapel-shaped, dragon-headed reliquary that has survived until this day without losing its shape, identity or place in the Hedal stave church, and finally been elected to the official heraldic image of its region.

By following the different visual and textual threads from the extant medieval reliquaries to the lost ones, from the iconography to the bones and bundles, from the artisan to the bishop, it has been possible to write a first history of the medieval reliquaries in the Nordic countries. Due to the character of the source material, it is a fragmentary history, built from damaged artefacts and ambiguous texts. Hopefully, however, the insights, arguments and discoveries presented here will be a useful starting point for future research and understanding of medieval reliquaries as artefacts, agents, and cult objects. Now that this systematic overview has been written, I believe much remains to be discovered of these objects and sources with the help of new methods and perspectives.

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# APPENDIX I. ILLUSTRATIONS

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MEDIEVAL RELIQUARIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

Sofia Lahti

Doktorsavhandling i konstvetenskap

Åbo Akademi 2019

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Photo: Riksantikvarieämbetet / Public domain.

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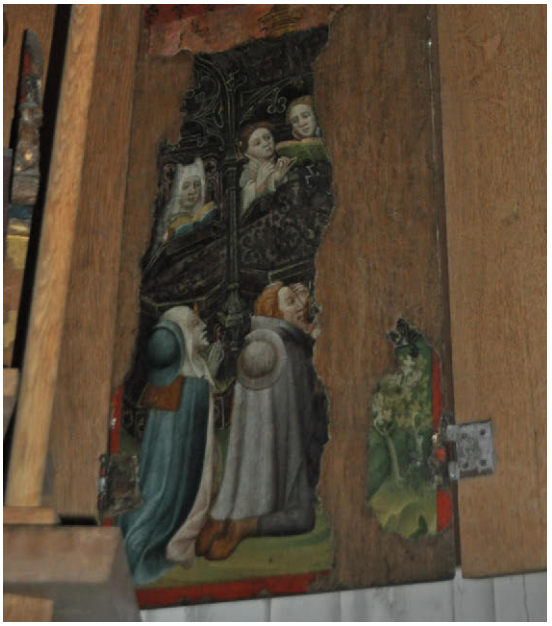

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Photo: P.O. Welin / FHA, CC-BY 4.0.

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Photo: P.O. Welin / FHA, CC-BY 4.0.

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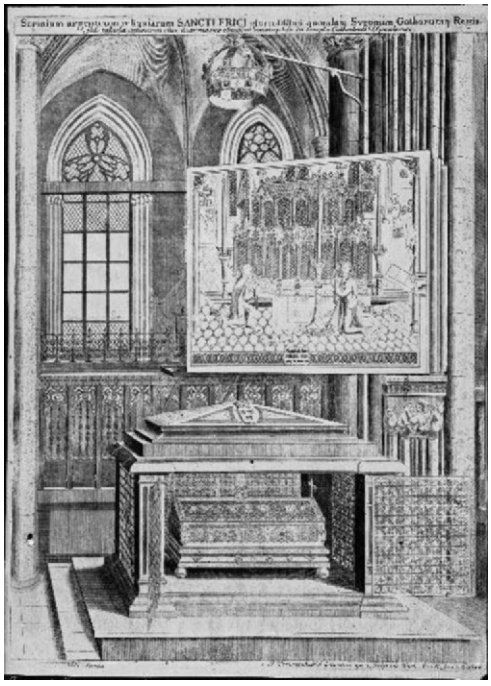

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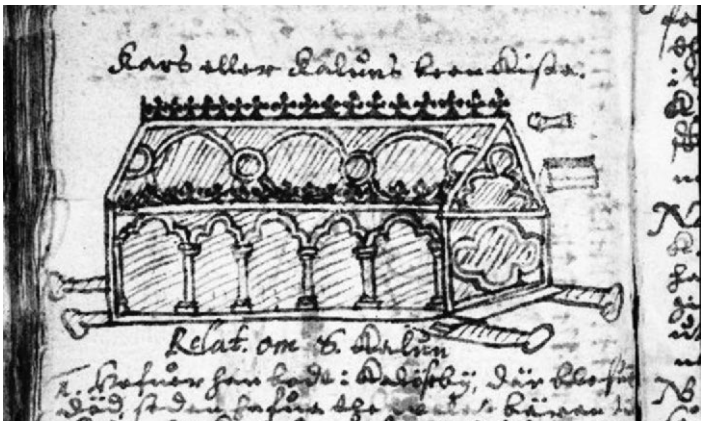
Photo: RAÄ / Public domain.



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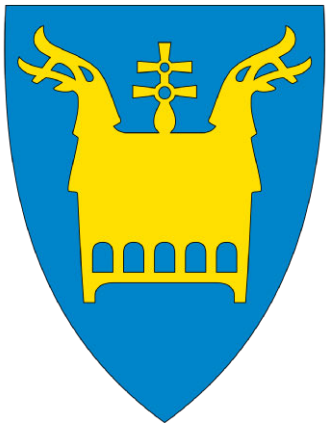

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Photo: Ola Myrin, 2016 /SHM. CC-BY.

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Published in: Feger, Otto (Bearb.): Ulrich Richental: Das Konzil zu Konstanz. Faksimile. Starnberg - Konstanz 1964, page 33r.
Source: Wikimedia Commons / Rosgartenmuseum Konstanz. Public domain.

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**APPENDIX II.**
LOST AND EXISTING RELIQUARIES IN
DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND FINLAND

SILVER ARMS AND SILK HEADS

MEDIEVAL RELIQUARIES IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

Sofia Lahti

Doktorsavhandling i konstvetenskap
Åbo Akademi
2019

## APPENDIX II: LOST AND EXISTING RELIQUARIES IN IN DENMARK, NORWAY, SWEDEN AND FINLAND

The purpose of the catalogue is to present all the discovered extant and lost Nordic reliquaries as a corpus in order to facilitate the comparative viewing of all the material collected for this project. Thus, the catalogue is not intended to contain all the available data related to each of the reliquaries discussed; instead, the descriptions are brief, with a restricted number of details, relics, and written sources.

Only reliquaries in a narrow sense of the word are considered in the catalogue, but even this limit is inevitably ambiguous. Objects with a different primary function, such as the altar *sepulchre* and wooden sculptures, are excluded. However, altarpieces and aumbries explicitly made for relics are included. Silver or gold sculptures of saints are included as presumable reliquaries; in the case of monstrances and pyxes, some of them are explicitly defined as reliquaries in the written sources, while the reliquary status of others is based on my own interpretation. The reliquaries are grouped according to the same genres as in the dissertation text; some of them have an uncertain classification.

### How to read the table

In the following table, the notions of lost and extant reliquaries are arranged according to 1) existence, 2) typology, 3) country, 4) location if known. Within each typological group, lost items are listed before extant ones.

**Country**: The countries are listed in the following order: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland. The division is based on the current understanding of the

medieval borders in the region, but taking into account the fact that Scania and Gotland belonged to Danish rule during the period.

**Location**: Within each country, locations are listed in an alphabetical order. In some cases, the original location is unknown.

**Type**: Many of the typological divisions, both in extant and lost reliquaries, are inevitably vague or arbitrary. In some cases, the definition is clear (e.g. an extant arm reliquary can be classified in the "arm" section), but in many cases, the classification is an interpretation based on the available information. Question marks are used to underline this ambiguity. The class of "reliquary" naturally consists of reliquaries that would belong to the other classes, but cannot be placed in any of them due to lack of sufficient details.
-A number is added after the type definition. If several similar items (with exactly the same details) are known from the same place, each item is not given its own entry, but the amount of objects is expressed by a number after the classification ("e.g. monstrance, 2"). In some cases, the number is unknown; then I have used the sign 'x'. Otherwise, if the entry concerns only one item, the number is 1.

**Details**: The information about each item is reduced to the minimum due to the large amount of entries. Instead of a detailed description, only the "essential" details are mentioned. For some reliquaries, there are no known details.

**Relics**: Because some reliquaries could contain as many as dozens of different relics, only a limited number of them are listed in this field. If the reliquary contains less than five relics, they are all included in the catalogue. In the case of more than five relics, only a selection is included, chosen on the basis of their position in the reliquary's list of contents and their potential association to the

reliquary's visual message or identity. In order to save space, I have omitted the abbreviation "St." from the saints' names.

**Saint(s) associated:** This field is for the cases where the object was known and referred to as the reliquary of a certain saint.

**Size**: I have not had access to the size information of all extant reliquaries, but I have included it whenever possible. As for the lost reliquaries, the size can be expressed in terms of weight or, for instance, by a reference to where it was kept or how it was carried. The Nordic measure *aln* or *alen* (forearm) amounted approximately to 60 cm. *Fot* (foot) was circa 30 cm.

**Material**: The materials of lost reliquaries are not always known. In some cases, they are ambiguously described; for instance, a "gilt" object may be of gilt silver, gilt copper, or something else. Even the materials of extant reliquaries are not necessarily known, and for instance different types of wood or mixed metals are not easy to define without a specialised material study.

**Dating (estimated):** With the extant reliquaries, I have mainly relied on the estimates of earlier researchers. With the lost ones, the dates are based on the dating of the written sources in which the objects are mentioned. I have used the letters to indicate the relation of the estimated dating to the inserted year: 'c.' for circa, 'b-' for before, and 'a-' for after.

**Origin/maker:** In very rare cases, the artisan maker of a reliquary is known by name; in most cases, the country of origin can be estimated based on either stylistic, tecjnical, or historical details.

**Owner/donor/commissioner:** This is particularly for personal ownership, which often is recorded in documents such as wills or reliquary lists. If the

object was owned by a church, that information is inserted in the Location field and not repeated here.

**Where now:** The current location of an extant reliquary.

**Cat. nr:** The inventory number of this object in the museum's catalogue. I have not managed to acquire this information for all the extant reliquaries, but have inserted it whenever possible.

**Main sources:** In order to save space, this field does not contain the entire bibliography about the object in question. I have selected, whenever possible, a published edition of the original document and one or two relevant research publications with good references to other existing literature.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | N | N |
| **location** | Ringsted | Ringsted | Vestervig | Bergen | Nidaros St Clemens/St Mary |
| **type** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** |
| **details** | | | | | Simple; later covered with gold sheets. |
| **relics** | Canute Lavard | Eric Plovpenning | Thöger | Sunniva | Olaf |
| **saint(s) associated** | Canute Lavard | Eric | Thöger | Sunniva | Olaf |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | gilt (copper?) | | wood, metal? | wood? | wood, gold |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1170 | | | 1035? 1070? | c. 1031 |
| **origin/maker** | Denmark | | | Norway? | Norway |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | king Valdemar / Esrom abbey | | | | Magnus the Good |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Danmarks historie, I, 1977, 337-338. | Olrik 1968, Danske helgeners levned 2, 374-403. | Olrik 1968, Danske helgeners levned 2, 331-338. | Nicolaysen 1888, 3-4. | Ekroll 2002, 63-94. |

| | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | N | S |
| **location** | Nidaros Cathedral | Nidaros Cathedral | Nidaros Cathedral | Oslo | Arboga |
| **type** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** |
| **details** | Arch rows, animal heads on crested roof. | Bottomless, used like a cover over the two earlier shrines. A large sapphire was added, and possibly a canopy. Was carried on a platform. | Carved images of St. Olaf's life | Church-shaped, Gothic?; gilt silver plates, a bronze relief on top with Hallvard's martyrium attributes: arrows and a millstone. | gold shrine with his bones hidden underground, according to folklore |
| **relics** | Olaf | Olaf | Olaf | Hallvard | Sven |
| **saint(s) associated** | Olaf | Olaf | Olaf | Hallvard | Sven |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | wood, gold, silver, gems, crystal | silver cover over two older wooden caskets | wood | wood, gilt silver, bronze? | gold |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1219 | late 15th century? | c. 1564 | 11th century? | |
| **origin/maker** | Norway? | | Nidaros, Belgian carpenter | Norway? | Sweden |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | Archbishop Öystein Erlendsson? | Sapphire from archbishop Erik Valkendorf; canopy? from archbishop Aslak Bolt | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Ekroll 2002, 63-94. | Ekroll 2002, 63-94. | Lidén 1999, 193; Ekroll 2002, 89–93. | DN 2:75; Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ, 155–158 | Lundén, Credo nr 4 /1944, 198. |

| | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Karlskyrka | Munktorp | Skänninge | Skövde | Uppsala Cathedral |
| **type** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** |
| **details** | Handles for carrying in processions. Arcade decorations. Had a smaller silver casket inside. | Carried with David's image on a bier, which still existed in 18th century. | A smaller shrine was on top of it, or it had a silver cover? | | Church-shaped?; covered with a baldachin cloth, carried on a bier |
| **relics** | Karlung | David | Ingrid | Helena | Eric (bones in six bundles) |
| **saint(s) associated** | Karlung | | Ingrid | Helena | Eric |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | oak | | silver? | | wood, gold |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1200s | | 1507 | | 1273? |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden? | Sweden | Sweden? | Sweden? | Sweden |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Lundén 1944, 188; 192-193. | Lundén, Credo nr. 3/ 1944, 134-137. | Sturekrönika 194-195; Silfverstolpe 1895, 153. | Werwing 1746, 294 | Bengtsson 2010, 133–140. |

| | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | D |
| **location** | Uppsala Cathedral | Vadstena convent | Vadstena convent | Vadstena convent | Odense Cathedral |
| **type** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** |
| **details** | Large, gothic, church-shaped shrine, carried on a bier | A large gilt silver shrine with sculptural details and gems; carried in processions. | five silver plates; unfinished | | "Söjleskrinet", pillar and arcade pattern, formerly reliefs of saints and blue and yellow gems? |
| **relics** | Eric | Birgitta | Katarina | Birgitta | Canute |
| **saint(s) associated** | Eric | Birgitta | Katarina | Birgitta | Canute |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | silver | silver | silver | gilt silver | wood, gilt copper plates |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1405-1415 | 1412 | 1513-1524 | 1582 | early 12th c. |
| **origin/maker** | Stockholm; Lambert/Lambrecht | Sweden; Lambert? | Sweden, Johannes Menss | Stockholm, Hans Theuson | Denmark? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | Funded by queen Margrete | Sten Bengtsson Bielke; Ture Bengtsson | | King Johan III and queen Katarina Jagellonica | bishop Hubald of Odense |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | Odense Cathedral |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Bengtsson 2010, 138–140. | Processus….Catarinae, 58; Lindblom 1963, 20. | DV 359?, Andersson 1983, 94 ; 101. | Werwing 1746, 292; 444. | Vitae Sanctorum Danorum, 129–134; Vellev 1986, 123–156. |

| | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Odense Cathedral | Härad church | Lye church | Uppsala Cathedral | Vadstena convent |
| **type** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine?, 1** | **shrine?, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** |
| **details** | "Skrålågsskrinet", slanted lid; formerly reliefs of saints. | stone coffin with figure reliefs; previously with metal details; relic niche under ridged lid | Christ, Mary, apostles | Gabled roof, renaissance elements, angels | Simple wooden coffin with iron mounts, apparently used to transport Birgitta's remains from Rome. A bier for carrying. |
| **relics** | Benedikt | | | Eric | Birgitta |
| **saint(s) associated** | Benedikt (Canute's brother?) | Eskil? Botvid? | | Eric | Birgitta |
| **size** | | 133x48x71cm | | | 167x53x35 cm |
| **material** | wood, gilt copper plates | sandstone | sandstone | silver | pine?; bier of oak |
| **dating (estimated)** | early 12th c. | early 13th c? | 12th C? | 1574-1579 | 1373 |
| **origin/maker** | Denmark? | Gotland; Majestatis school | Sighraf the stone sculptor, Gotland | Stockholm; Hans Rosenfeldt | Rome? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | King Johan III and queen Katarina Jagellonica | Katarina of Vadstena? |
| **where now** | Odense Cathedral | Härad church | Lye church | Uppsala cathedral | Vadstena convent |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Vellev 1986, 123–156 | Bygdén 1954, 328. | SK 105, Kyrkor på Gotland, 1965 | Bygdén 1954, 360–364; Källström 1954, 418–423. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 37. |

| | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | F | F | D |
| **location** | Vadstena convent | Vamlingbo church | Nousiainen church | Turku Cathedral | Unknown |
| **type** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine?, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **shrine, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | Covered with red silk; silver symbols of noble families and other silver ornaments; gable roof. | Christ, Mary, apostles. Parts inserted in church wall | Copper plates with engraved images of St Henrik's legend. | Church-shaped; canopy roof over pillars; painted; gothic arcade reliefs; a smaller casket kept on the lid. | king Svend Estridsen took it with him to battle |
| **relics** | Katarina (orig. Birgitta) | | Henrik | Hemming? | St Vincent |
| **saint(s) associated** | Katarina (orig. Birgitta) | | Henrik | Hemming? | St Vincent |
| **size** | 64 x 106 x 38,5 cm | | | | |
| **material** | wood, velvet, silver | sandstone | black limestone, copper plates | wood | |
| **dating (estimated)** | c. 1381 | 12th C? | c. 1430-1450 | 1415? | b-1062 |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden | Sweden | Flanders | Finland | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | bishop Magnus Tavast | | king Svend Estridsen? |
| **where now** | Vadstena convent | Vamlingbo church | Nousiainen church | Turku cathedral | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Lindblom 1963, 39–93; Andersson 1983, 95–99. | SK 105, Kyrkor på Gotland, 1965 | Rinne 1932, 245-249; Edgren & Melanko 1996, passim. | Rinne 1932, 301-310; Hirvonen 1997, 102-103. | Harald Hardrådes saga, ch. 82 |

| | 31 | 32 | 33 | 34 | 35 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) | Copenhagen, Our Lady c. | Copenhagen, Our Lady c. | Copenhagen, Our Lady c. | Copenhagen, Our Lady c. |
| **type** | **casket?, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | "civitas dicta Köpnehaffn" | | House-shaped, with gilt cross on the lid. | House-shaped, with St Blaise figure on top. | House-shaped, "new", with a foot; with a bishop figure on the lid. |
| **relics** | Paul's mantle (large part); Jacob; Paul; Lawrence; Ursula (large part) | John the Baptist's tooth; oil from Nicholas' grave; Andrew's cross; Gothard; many others. | Nicholas; Martin; nameless relics. | Blaise; 11000 virgins; Canute's clothes; others without names written. | bishop Magnus; Christopher; Cordula; the Innocent children; Canute; many relics without name. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | Blaise | Magnus? |
| **size** | | | "small" | "small" | |
| **material** | | copper | ivory, gilt silver | silver | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Liebgott 1982, 126 | SRD VIII, 266, 268. | SRD VIII, 264. | SRD VIII, 263, 268. | SRD VIII, 262, 268. |

| | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen, Our Lady c. | Copenhagen, Our Lady c. | Copenhagen, Our Lady c. | Copenhagen, Our Lady c. | Copenhagen, Our Lady c. |
| **type** | **casket?, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | Castle-shaped, gilt, with two crystals in the middle. | "Town called Copenhagen" | "vase" with Annunciation | "new" silver-"dose" with a gilt cross on the lid | "the large casket called Sanctuarium" |
| **relics** | Mary Magdalene (large part); St Jacob major. | Paul; Jacob; Lawrence; Ursula | Mary's hair; Anna's arm; Elizabeth | Holy Cross (large piece); 11000 virgins | Bartholomew (many parts); Julian; Domitian; Agnes; many unnamed relics. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | Mary | Holy cross | |
| **size** | | | | | "large" |
| **material** | ivory, gold, crystal | | | silver | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 262, 268. | SRD VIII, 266, 268; Jexlev 1976. | SRD VIII, 261, 267. | SRD VIII, xx. | SRD VIII, 266, 268 . |

| | 41 | 42 | 43 | 44 | 45 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | | | | "long" | |
| **relics** | Christ; Nicholas; Magdalene; Bartholomew; others | Theban saints; innocent (children); Jeronimo; anonymous saints. | Half of St Apollonia's jaw with two teeth; many others (unspecified). | St Canute's jaw with three teeth; several anonymous relics. | The head of St Petrissa of the 11000 virgins. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | "larger" | | |
| **material** | | | | | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 287. | SRD VIII, 1837, 289. | SRD VIII, 1837, 289. | SRD VIII, 1837, 289. | SRD VIII, 1837, 289. |

| | 46 | 47 | 48 | 49 | 50 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | | House-shaped?; divided in 3 spaces; Calvary group on the "roof" | carved images of birds and animals | Oblong, with 2 gilt copper handles and lid of gilt copper. | On a high place near archbishop's sacristy, north of the high choir; carried on a bier. |
| **relics** | Christopher; George; Cosma; David; others (c. 10). | Of Mary's clothes; Peter; Andrew; many others. *Lower space* : Mary, John the Baptist, many others. | Lawrence; Christ; Tree of Paradise; others (c. 20); a bag with nameless relics. | Holy cross; Andrew; Cordula; Adrian; 11000 virgins; Theban legion; many others. | almost all bones of bishop-martyr Marinus. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | Marinus |
| **size** | | | | "small" | "largest of 3" |
| **material** | | gilt silver | ivory | ivory, gilt copper | copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1370? |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 1837, 292. | SRD 8, 447; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 91. | SRD 8, 450; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 95. | SRD 8, 451; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 98. | SRD 8, 452; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 101-102. |

| | 51 | 52 | 53 | 54 | 55 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | On a high place near archbishop's sacristy, north of high choir. Longish; carried on a bier. | On a high place near archbishop's sacristy, north of high choir. Lion-shaped feet; 32 images; carried on a bier. | In sacristy, lowest relic room; 2 locks of gilt copper; on top, a little wooden casket w/ lock of gilt copper. Used in processions for rain. | In sacristy, lowest relic room; lid broken, no lock. | In sacristy, lowest relic room; lid fine, but useless lock. |
| **relics** | c. 40 different relics | Christopher; George; others (c. 100!) | The head of one if the 11000 virgins; Ansgar's spinal bone; others (c. 15) | Euphrosina (almost all bones) | Florentia (almost all bones) |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | Euphrosina | Florentia |
| **size** | | | Largest of the three wooden shrines in sacristy | | |
| **material** | copper | copper | wood, gilt copper | cypress | wood |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 452; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 101-102. | SRD 8, 453; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 101-102. | SRD 8, 454; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 104. | SRD 8, 454; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 104. | SRD 8, 454; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 104. |

| | 56 | 57 | 58 | 59 | 60 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Odense, St Alban's church | Odense, St Alban's church |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 2** | **casket?, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | Archbishop Eskil put it on the main altar during its consecration in 1145 | Archbishop Eskil put them on the main altar during its consecration in 1145 | "capsula" with images of the three holy kings, with golden crowns. | "capsula" | "capsula" |
| **relics** | | | | Alban | Oswald |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | The three Kings | Alban | Oswald |
| **size** | | | | small | small |
| **material** | "electro" | ivory | silver, partly gilt | | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1145 | b-1145 | b-1228 | 11th century | 11th century |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | Archbishop Eskil? | Archbishop Eskil? | Archbishop Andreas Sunesen | St Canute? | St Canute? |
| **where now** | | | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SDHK 182 | SDHK 182 | Axel-Nilsson 1989, 34 | Vellev 1986, 124. | Vellev 1986, 124. |

| | 61 | 62 | 63 | 64 | 65 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Ribe cathedral | Roskilde (Cathedral) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | covered all over by silver plates | Church-shaped, gilt, with engraved images | "cistula de palpebra ceti longa & nigra", (long, black little box of a whale's eyelid?!) marked with a N. | | "cistula eburnea majori", marked with an E. |
| **relics** | | | Piro; Jacob. | 8 heads of 11000 virgins + the head of one of the companions of St Gereon. | Lawrence; Lord's tomb; others ( c. 20) |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | "small" | "small" | | "large" | "larger" |
| **material** | wood?, silver | gilt copper? | | | ivory |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1312 | | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Ribe Oldemoder, 115 | DK, 1641. | SRD VIII, 1837, 276. | SRD VIII, 1837, 276. | SRD VIII, 1837, 273. |

| | 66 | 67 | 68 | 69 | 70 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Torekov |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | "scrinio", with stones and images, marked with an F. | "scrinio eburneo sculpto" (with reliefs?); marked with an I. | Covered with leather; marked with a Z. | Marked with a K; containing four bursas (the contents of each bursa are listed separately). | "plenty of idolatry went on around it" |
| **relics** | Lord's tomb&table; Aaron's rod; others (c. 15) | Odilia; Albina; Sapientia; Pirana; Emerentiana; others, non-named. | many; incl. Nordics: Olaf; Ansgar; Birgitta; Wilhelm. | | Tora? |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | Tora? |
| **size** | | | | | c. 1x1x1m |
| **material** | silver?, gems | ivory | wood?, leather | | gilt copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500? | b-1500? |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 1837, 273. | SRD VIII, 1837, 275. | SRD VIII, 1837, 281. | SRD VIII, 301. | Weibull 1904-08, 99. |

| | 71 | 72 | 73 | 74 | 75 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Visby (Our Lady) | unknown | Bergen, Apostlakirken | Konghelle | Nidaros |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 2** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | "a casket full of relics" | taken out of Norway by bishop Olaf Engelbrektsson in 1537 | | | |
| **relics** | | | | | Eystein/Augustin |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | Eystein/Augustin |
| **size** | | | | | larger than the one of St Bernhard |
| **material** | wood? | gilt silver on wood? | wood | | gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1427 | b-1537 | b-1523 | b-1127 | |
| **origin/maker** | | Norway? | | Denmark? | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | bishop Olaf Engelbrektsson? | | from king Erik Emune to king Sigurd | 13th century? |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Cronica Guthilandorum, 1978 (1633), 201-205. | DN V:1118. | Nicolaysen 1862–1866, s. 428 | *Heimskringla* : Magnussönernas historia, ch. 32. | Ekroll 2002, 89. |

| | 76 | 77 | 78 | 79 | 80 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Nidaros | Nidaros | Selje cathedral | Stavanger Cathedral | Trondenes |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket? arm?, 1** | **casket?, 1** |
| **details** | | | | | |
| **relics** | Bernhard | Olaf's clothes | Sunniva | of Swithun's arm; Christ; silver container with St Olaf's blood; Sunniva; many others. | Olaf |
| **saint(s) associated** | Bernhard | Olaf | Sunniva | Svithun | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | gilt copper | gilt silver, enameled gold plates | | | copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | | | | b-1517 | b-1476 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | 13th century? | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Ekroll 2002, 89. | Ekroll 2002, 89. | Nicolaysen 1888, 3–4. | DN IV: 1074. | Morten 2013, 17 |

| | 81 | 82 | 83 | 84 | 85 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Öye church, Balders | Unknown, Dalarna | Alvastra abbey | Björksta | Botkyrka church |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | Church-shaped?; buttons and cross on top; buttons as feet | "helgedoma kar oc helge qwinnes skrin" | "unum Sctinium argenteum cum reliquiis" for the altar of Our Lady, Peter and Paul | | |
| **relics** | Olaf? | | | Olaf | Botvid |
| **saint(s) associated** | Olaf? | | | | |
| **size** | "½ Aln langt, et Qvarter bred og 3 Qvarter høyt" | | | | |
| **material** | brass | silver? | silver | | bronze |
| **dating (estimated)** | | b-1525 | b-1318 | b-1349 | 13th century? |
| **origin/maker** | | Sweden? | | | Sweden? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | Lars Ulfsson & Ingrid Anundsdotter (will) | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | / | | | | |
| **main sources** | Ramus 1715, 96 | Diplomatarium Dalekarlicum 2, 1844, 59. | SDHK 2907 | Morten 2013, 17 | Trotzig 1987, 59 |

| | 86 | 87 | 88 | 89 | 90 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Karlskyrka | Kumla church | Kumla church | Linköping Cathedral | Linköping Cathedral |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket?, 1** |
| **details** | Inside a larger wooden sarcophagus; small, included only one bone. | Footed; repaired or improved several times | repaired or purchased 1504 | | |
| **relics** | Karlung | Torgils | Cecilia | Ursula? | Nils Hermansson |
| **saint(s) associated** | Karlung | Torgils | Cecilia | Ursula? | Nils Hermansson |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | silver | | | silver | wood? |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1200s? | 1431? | b-1504 | | 1515 |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden? | | Sweden? | | Sweden? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Lundén, Credo nr 4 /1944, 192-193. | *Kumla kyrkas räkenskaper, CIII, CXIX, 10-11, 98, 160* | von Bonsdorff, 127. | Källström 1939, 214. | DN 17:1183; Nisbeth 2001, 13-15; Fröjmark 1992, 132 |

| | 91 | 92 | 93 | 94 | 95 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Riala | Skara (Dominican abbey) | Skara cathedral | Skara cathedral | Stora Tuna |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket?, 1** |
| **details** | House-shaped; "ett sankte Jacobs hus", possibly could be suspended | | | Improved or substituted after 1517 (gold and silver was collected). | "altarkista" with six gilt, rectangular parts. |
| **relics** | | | | Brynolf | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Jacob | | | Brynolf | |
| **size** | | metal parts 13 lmk 15 l | 9,5 lmk 3,5 l | | |
| **material** | silver? | gilt and non-gilt silver, wood? | silver | gold, silver, wood? | silver, gilt silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | | b-1540 | b-1529 | 1492 | b-1553 |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden? | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 118; 234. | Källström 1939, 241. | Källström 1939, 241. | Pernler 2004, 69-73. | Källström 1939, 260 |

| | 96 | 97 | 98 | 99 | 100 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Uppsala Cathedral | Uppsala Cathedral? | Vadstena | Vadstena | Vadstena |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket?, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket?, 1** |
| **details** | Enameled, with leather lid. | "vnam thecam argenteam plenam reliquiis sanctorum", | "capsa", to house a relic that had been removed from its cross reliquary prior to being given to Birgitta. | | |
| **relics** | | | Holy Cross | Louis the Pious + others | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | enameled copper/brass, leather | silver | | ivory | wood |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1368 | b-1346 | b-1349 | b-1349 | b-1459 |
| **origin/maker** | | | Sweden? | France? | Sweden? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | canon Henrik Ludvigsson | Birgitta | Queen Blanche to Birgitta | from queen Filippa |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SDHK 9346 | SDHK 5312 | *Acta et processus* , 635 | Himmelska Uppenbarelser, ch. 59 | SD 27358 |

| | 101 | 102 | 103 | 104 | 105 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | F | D | D |
| **location** | Vadstena | Vadstena | Naantali | unknown | unknown |
| **type** | **casket?, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 2** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | to subsitute the wooden one from queen Filippa in the choir of St Anne | Simple, red casket; not made specifically for Katarina's relics. Placed inside the larger velvet shrine. | | Chapel-shaped; enamel image of the Adoration; metal plates missing on most sides. | Chapel-shaped; Christ in mandorla; Crucifiction, Peter, Paul; other side ornamental. |
| **relics** | | Katarina of Vadstena | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Katarina | | The Three Kings? | Christ, Peter, Paul? |
| **size** | | to fit inside the velvet shrine | "small" | 30x20x10,5 cm | 18x18x8,5 cm |
| **material** | gold | wood | wood?, silver | oak, gilt and enameled copper | wood, gilt and enameled copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1459 | b-1489 | | c.1180 | c.1200 |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden? | | Finland? | Limoges | Limoges, "Master Alpais" |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | DNM | DNM |
| **cat.nr** | | | | 9110 | 9111 |
| **main sources** | SD 27358 | DV 488:15-16. | Källström 1939, 319 | Andersson 1980, 8–9. | |

| | 106 | 107 | 108 | 109 | 110 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | unknown | unknown | Eke church, Gotland | Gotland | Holbaek church |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 2** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | Chapel-shaped; crested roof; Christ; Evangelists; Adoration of the Magi. | Small leather casket with a handle on the lid; relics written on the box (?) | House-shaped; ridge turret and decorated gables; painted figures: St. Olaf, Christ as Man of Sorrows | Fragments: two dragon-heads from two different locations in Gotland | Wooden casket with decorative metal parts, a lock, and a handle on the lid; found inside an altar. |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | The Three Kings? | | | | |
| **size** | 17,5x17,5x7,5 | 4,5x7,2x5,2 cm | 38x21,5x43,5cm | | |
| **material** | oak, gilt and enameled copper, quartz | gilt leather, metal | oak | copper | wood, metal |
| **dating (estimated)** | c. 1190 | | 1400s | c. 1100 | |
| **origin/maker** | Limoges | Denmark? | Sweden? | | Denmark? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | DNM | DNM | Gotlands fornsal | SHM | DNM |
| **cat.nr** | 9112 | 10373 | GFDEP201 | 8312 | D600 |
| **main sources** | | | Cornell 1918, 264–265.; Stolt 1974, 527-529. | | |

| | 111 | 112 | 113 | 114 | 115 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund Cathedral | Nyböl, St Clemens | Sorö abbey? | Tamdrup | Viborg |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | Chapel-shaped; only fragments preserved: roof parts | Enameled, four feet; shaped like a portable altar (similar to the one in Norrala, which is not included here) | Chapel-shaped; crested roof; attached polychromed enamel figures, on the other side painted ones: Christ, Adoration, Peter, Paul | golden altar? Only parts: 7 embossed, gilded plates, scenes of Harald Bluetooth's conversion. | Chapel-shaped, suspended from the vault with gilt chains. Only a dragon-head fragment survives. |
| **relics** | | | | Poppo | Kjeld |
| **saint(s) associated** | | the Apostles? (their names engraved along the lid) | The Three Kings? | Poppo | Kjeld |
| **size** | | | | | 90 cm (1,5 alen) |
| **material** | gilt and enameled copper | wood, enameled copper | wood, gilt and enameled copper; gems. | gilt copper | wood, gilt bronze |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1200s | | 1200-1250 | c.1200 | 1189 |
| **origin/maker** | France, Limoges | Rein area, Cologne/Xanten? | Limoges | Denmark? | Norway? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | Kulturen museum, Lund | DNM | DNM | DNM | DNM (dragon head) |
| **cat.nr** | 24383 | 12531 | 9109 | | 21972 |
| **main sources** | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 22. | | | | Petersen 1888, 110-114. |

| | 116 | 117 | 118 | 119 | 120 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Viborg | Unknown (Vatnås, Sigdal, Buskerud?) | unknown | unknown | unknown, Valdres |
| **type** | **casket?** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | arcade patterns; only a fragment exists (reliquary function uncertain) | Church-shaped; Christ, Mary, saints, animals; some plates from antemensale? Figures of the same stencil found on other caskets. | Church-shaped; Christ in mandorla and crucified, evangelists; cross on top; dragon heads. Very similar to the Hedal casket. | fragment: door from a chapel-shaped casket; two keyholes; St Peter in relief, holding a key | fragment: rectangular plate with three angels in circles. Assembled together with two other fragments. |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Christ, Mary etc | | St Peter? | |
| **size** | | 46x12 cm | | | |
| **material** | | wood, gilt copper plates | copper, red and turquoise stones | gilt and enameled copper | gilt and enameled copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | 10th century | 1230-1250 | | 13th century? | 1200s |
| **origin/maker** | | Norway, Bergen? | | Limoges | Limoges/Rein |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | Viborg museum | DNM | NMCH | OMCH | OMCH |
| **cat.nr** | C693X003 | 9085 | NF.1933-0232A | 7313_a | C11570 |
| **main sources** | Roesdahl 1977, 26-33. | Grinder-Hansen 2003, 159–172. | | | |

| | 121 | 122 | 123 | 124 | 125 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Aust-Agder | Bergen, Allehelgenskirken | Eidsberg, Östfold | Filefjell, St Thomas church | Flåvaer chruch |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | fragment: gable from a house-shaped casket; gothic St Peter figure in relief, holding two keys | fragment | Church-shaped; only fragment remains, assembled together with other fragments. Crested, ornamented roof. | Church-shaped; arcade pattern; saints; animals; dragon heads on the roof | Church-shaped; only plates survive |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | St Peter? | | | | |
| **size** | 18,1 x 7,4 cm | | | w34,8cm/39,5x37,5cm? | |
| **material** | copper | gilt copper | gilt and enameled copper | oak, gilt copper plates | |
| **dating (estimated)** | 13th century? | b-1250 | 1200s | 1230s | 12th century |
| **origin/maker** | Limoges? | Norway, Bergen | Limoges/Rein? | Norway, Bergen? | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | Aust-Agder museum | Bergen museum | OMCH | Bergen museum | Bergen museum |
| **cat.nr** | AAM.06901 | | C10383 | | |
| **main sources** | | Kielland 1927, 98. | | Grieg 1973, 21. | Undset 1878, 64–65; 86 |

| | 126 | 127 | 128 | 129 | 130 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Fortun | Halsenöy abbey | Hedal | Hundorp church | Karmöen, Torvestad church |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | Church-shaped; open arcade below; reliefs of seated saints; alphabet; roof plate lost | fragments: two dragon heads from the gables of a casket | Church-shaped; crest with dragon heads. Reliefs of Thomas Beckett, Adoration; crucifiction. Carried on a bier that still exists. | Church-shaped; only copper plates remain, attached on a 17th-century casket | fragment: dragon head from the gable of a casket |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | Thomas Beckett? | | |
| **size** | 31,5cm | | w41,2cm | | |
| **material** | oak, gilt copper plates | gilt copper | brass | enameled copper | gilt bronze |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1200s | | 1275-1300? | b-1250 | b-1250 |
| **origin/maker** | Norway? | Norway | Bergen? | Limoges | Norway |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | Bergen museum | Bergen museum | Hedal church | Maihaugen, Oslo | Bergen museum |
| **cat.nr** | | | | SS-17480 | |
| **main sources** | Larsen 1997, 101-104. | Nicolaysen 1890, 145. | Nicolaysen 1888, 4–24 | | Nicolaysen 1890, 145. |

| | 131 | 132 | 133 | 134 | 135 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | S | S |
| **location** | Torpo church, Buskerud | Tuft, Buskerud | Tönsberg, Lavranskirke | unknown | Eriksberg |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | fragment: part of roof crest | church-shaped, with tower and transept; one wall not painted (reliquary function uncertain) | Church-shaped; only fragment remains, assembled together with other fragments. Keyhole and lozenge ornament. | only quadrilobe detail remains: rests of blue enamel; round hole in the middle | House-shaped; saints in arcades; engraved relic list, crested roof, animal heads in gables, animal feet. |
| **relics** | | | | | Sudarium, Pancras, Vincent, Melano and Bobino, Sabina, Virgin Mary, Andrew, Holy Cross. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | St Mark | |
| **size** | | 130x49,5x28 cm | | 11,1 x 11,3 cm | 40,3x15,5x50 (without feet&animal heads) |
| **material** | | wood, painted | gilt and enameled copper | gilt and enameled copper | oak, gilt copper plates |
| **dating (estimated)** | 13th century | | 1200s | 1250-1349 | a-1150 |
| **origin/maker** | Norway | | Limoges/Rein/Norway? | | Sweden, Västergötland |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | Clemens? bishop Bengt the Good? |
| **where now** | OMCH | OMCH | OMCH | SHM | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | | C10470 | C603 | 9110 | 5561 |
| **main sources** | Grieg 1973, 24. | | | | Grinder-Hansen 1999, 71-72. |

| | 136 | 137 | 138 | 139 | 140 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Frösö church, Jämtland | Ilsbo church, Hälsingland | Jäla | Skog church, Härnösand | Spånga church (Sthlm) |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | House-shaped, painted, red, stars. No feet, but an arcade below. | House-shaped, painted red with star patterns; dragon heads on top. Feet lost. | House-shaped; saints in arcades; engraved relic list crested roof with , animal heads, animal feet. | House-shaped; four feet; crested roof with crosses in gables; arcade pattern; fragments of paint, gilding | Church-shaped with transept; animal feet. Humans and plants in gilt, enameled plates: Christ, angel, knight, Mary, evangelists. |
| **relics** | | | Eleven thousand Virgins, the Sepulchre, John the Baptist's head, Julian, Alexander. | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | 28,5x14,3x26cm | 25,5x8,5x21cm | 41,5x16x50,3cm (without feet&animal heads) | 24x17x12xcm | 31,5x12x23cm (without cross) |
| **material** | wood | wood | oak, gilt copper plates | fir | oak, gilt and enameled copper plates |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1200s | 1200s-1400s | a-1150 | 1150-1200 | a-1150/b-1250 |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden? | Sweden? | Sweden, Västergötland | Sweden? | Rein area, Xanthen? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | Birgitta? bishop Bengt the Good? | | |
| **where now** | Frösö church | Hälsinglands museum | Västergötlands museum | Murbergets museum | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | | 160 | 1503 | D93 | 3028 |
| **main sources** | Cornell 1918, 264-265. | Salvén 1913, 9. | Bygdén 1954, 326. | Cornell 1918, 264-265. | Gauthier 1972, *38*. |

| | 141 | 142 | 143 | 144 | 145 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Trönö church | Ullånger church | Uppsala Cathedral | Visingsö, Brahe church | Vreta abbey |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** |
| **details** | House-shaped; enameled images of death and burial of St. Thomas Beckett; two saints with books; dragon heads on top | House-shaped; images of angels and plants | House-shaped, enameled. Calvary group; images of Christ & Apostles | House-shaped; attached relief images of saints | House-shaped; only fragments preserved: apostle figure, columns, towers with cupolas |
| **relics** | Thomas Beckett? | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Thomas Beckett | | | | |
| **size** | 22x8,5x25,2cm (without animal heads) | 19x8,2x16,5cm | 31,3x12,5x22cm | 15,3x6,5x14,7cm | |
| **material** | fir, gilt and enameled coppar plates | gilt and enameled coppar plates | oak, gilt and enameled coppar plates | gilt and enameled coppar plates | gilt copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | c.1200 | 1200s | 1100s | 1200s | c.1185 |
| **origin/maker** | France, Limoges (animal heads Nordic) | France, Limoges? | France, Limoges | France, Limoges | West Germany |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | Trönö church | Ullånger church | UCM | Brahe church | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | 18011 |
| **main sources** | Andersson 1980, 10–11. | Andersson 1980, 11. | Andersson 1980, 8–10; Andersson 1982, 98; Bengtsson 2010, 146. | Andersson 1980, 11; 55. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 21-22. |

| | 146 | 147 | 148 | 149 | 150 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | F | F | D | D | D |
| **location** | Föglö | Turku | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral |
| **type** | **casket, 1** | **casket, 1** | **portable altar? , 1** | **portable altar?, 1** | **portable altar?, 1** |
| **details** | only metal parts remaining | Church-shaped, painted; under the roof of the larger "Hemming" sarcophagus. Carried in procession. | sculpted (>relief?) images of animals all over it; a stone attached to it and more relics under that. | On the high altar, on the left. With a rectangular, grey precious stone on top. | On the high altar, in the middle, and on top of this stands usually a pyx with the Host. |
| **relics** | | Several small relics in a textile pouch; two textile head reliquaries (possibly inserted later) | Holy cross; Lawrence; 11000 virgins; others. *Under the stone* : Holy cross; Hippolyte; Valerius; others. | Cecilia; Agatha; Valborg; Margaret; 11000 virgins; others (all female). | Florence; Euphrosyne's arm. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Hemming? Henrik? | Holy cross? | | |
| **size** | | | "large" | | |
| **material** | wood, metal | wood | gilt silver | silver?, stone | |
| **dating (estimated)** | | 14xx? | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 |
| **origin/maker** | | Finland? | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | Ålands museum | Turku cathedral | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Dreijer 1967, 16; 21–23 | Rinne 1932, 1932, 301–310; Hirvonen 1997, 102–103. | SRD 8, 448-449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 92-93. | SRD 8, 452; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 100. | SRD 8, 452; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 100. |

| | 151 | 152 | 153 | 154 | 155 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | N | D |
| **location** | Lund cathedral | Barlingbo, Gotland | Fröslev (swamp) | Nidaros Cathedral | Sorö abbey church |
| **type** | **portable altar?, 1** | **portable altar?, 1** | **portable altar, 1** | **aumbry?, 1** | **aumbry, 1** |
| **details** | (formerly?) On the high altar, to the right; on top a copper cross with an ivory image (of Christ?) and an alabaster image of Mary. | animal feet; engraved Christ, apostles, female saints; small hinged opening with lamb symbol in the lid | Enameled images: Christ crucified and in mandorla; detachable cross | Church tower-shaped top; four doors. | Aumbry in the wall near the altar; coats-of-arms of commissioner(s) |
| **relics** | many virgins and other saints | / | | | St Victor and St Salbina(?) |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Christ, apostles | | | |
| **size** | | 23,7x14,4x18,2cm | | c. 2x2m | |
| **material** | | copper/brass? | wood, enameled copper | | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1470 | c.1275 | 12th century | c. 1200 | 1525-1530 |
| **origin/maker** | | Gotland? | Denmark? | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | these relics were sent by the bishops of Selje to Asker, archbishop in Lund. | | | | Abbot Henrik Tornekrans |
| **where now** | / | SHM | DNM | / | Sorö abbey church |
| **cat.nr** | | 8950 | D751 | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 452; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 100. | Af Ugglas 1944, 17-36. | | Andås 2004, 181. | *Danmarks kirker: Sorö* , 66; 75. |

| | 156 | 157 | 158 | 159 | 160 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | S | D | D |
| **location** | Bryrup church, Jutland | Lögumkloster abbey | Övre Ullerud church | Lund Cathedral | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **altarpiece, 1** | **altarpiece, 1** | **altarpiece, 1** | **tablet, 1** | **tablet, 1** |
| **details** | relic niches above images of saints | 16 small relic niches inside, the corresponding saints named and depicted on the wings. In the north wall of the choir. | c. 30 small relic niches w/authenticas inside wing doors; outside a painting of Mary's meeting with Elizabeth. | Illustrated tablet, perhaps painted; used in the highest-degree feasts | marked with a D. |
| **relics** | | many | many: Christ, Mary, Stephen etc. | | many of Christ,Andrew, Mary, Magdalene, Wilhelm; many others |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | Mary | | |
| **size** | | 181 x 133 cm | 60,4x60,1cm | | |
| **material** | | wood | oak | | wood |
| **dating (estimated)** | | c.1325 | late medieval | b-1306 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | Sweden? | | Denmark? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | dean Anders | |
| **where now** | / | Lögum church | SHM | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | 21587 | | |
| **main sources** | Danmarks kirker XVI, bind 8: Bryrup, 3921–3922.; Liepe 2014, 45. | Danmarks kirker: Lögum klosterkirke, 180-182; 1104-1106 | Borgström 1915, 15; Liepe 2014, 45. | SRD III, 532; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 36. | SRD VIII, 272; 304. |

| | 161 | 162 | 163 | 164 | 165 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | N | N | S | S |
| **location** | Ås abbey | Bergen, Apostlakirken | Oslo, Mariakirken | Stockholm | Strängnäs Cathedral |
| **type** | **tablet, 1** | **antemensale/tablet, 1** | **antemensale/tablet, 1** | **tablet, 1** | **tablet, 1** |
| **details** | | "tabula pro reliquiis" | "tabula reliquiarum"; "board" | with glass in front; part of the King's daily religious routine | |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | 3m x 60cm (v alne langth ok en alne bredt) | "small" | |
| **material** | gilt (silver?) | wood?, silver | wood?, silver | silver?, glass | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1377 | a-1319 | b-1312 | b-1470 | b-1504 |
| **origin/maker** | Denmark? | Norway, Bergen? | Norway, Bergen? | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | Queen Margrete, for the honour of Our Lady | King Haakon V | King Haakon V | From king Karl Knutsson to his wife | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SD 11078; Diplomatarium Danicum 4:1, 284 | DN 4:128 | DN 4:128; DN VIII: 528; Grieg 1973, 19. | DF 3419 | Källström 1939, 261. |

| | 166 | 167 | 168 | 169 | 170 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | N | N |
| **location** | Uppsala | Vadstena convent | Vadstena convent | Bergen, Apostle church | Oslo, St Mary church |
| **type** | **tablet / pendant, 1** | **tablet, 1** | **tablet, 1** | **book, 2** | **book, 1** |
| **details** | Golden tablet with a golden chain; in daily personal use | with two relics. Possibly the same object as the tablet of Karl Knutsson. | Large, gilt tablet with glass in front of the relics. Previously in personal use. | two "silver texts with relics", apparently Gospels | A small missale with inserted relics, in daily use in the king's portable "chapel" |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | worth 1080 Swedish marks | "large" | | |
| **material** | gold | gold | gilt silver, glass | silver | small |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1496 | b-1454 | b-1470 | b-1312 | b-1312 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | written by brother Hiallm |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | from archbishop Jacob Ulfsson to his successor | Queen Filippa? | From king Karl Knutsson to the convent | King Haakon V | King Haakon V |
| **where now** | / | / | / | | |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Monumenta Ullerakerensia, 170 | DV 7.2.1454; ; SDHK 30357–30358; Gejrot 1988, 228. | DF 3419 | DN 4:128. | DN 4:128. |

| | 171 | 172 | 173 | 174 | 175 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | F | D | D | D |
| **location** | Hedal church | Jurmo chapel | unknown | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) |
| **type** | **pax plate, 1** | **pax plate, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** |
| **details** | Flat, rectangular plate with ornamental reliefs; relic space in the middle; hand-shaped handle. | Flat object with a handle and reliefs on both sides: Throne of Grace and enthroned Madonna. A round space for relics. Painted. | custom-made by remodeling another object from the English royal treasury | "gilt tower with an oblong glass and a hanging tooth" | "gilt monstrance with two figures on top" |
| **relics** | | | Christ's tunic | Gereon; Agnes. | George; John Evangelist's grave; Christ's grave; Mary's mantle. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | 70 x 15 cm | | | |
| **material** | wood | wood | gold, crystal | gilt silver, glass | crystal?, gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | | 15th century? | 1406 | b-1515 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | | England | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | King Henry IV of England to Queen Margrete on his daughter's wedding | | |
| **where now** | Hedal church? | Jurmo chapel | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Fett 1909, 141–142. | Nikula 1973, 74–75; Räsänen 2009, 64; 126–127. | Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89–93 | SRD VIII, 266, 268; Liebgott 1982, 126. | SRD VIII, 265, 268; Liebgott 1982, 124. |

| | 176 | 177 | 178 | 179 | 180 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) | Lund cathedral |
| **type** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance/pyx, 1** | **monstrance?, 1** |
| **details** | "monstrance with crystal and thorn" | "St Anthony's tower" with crystal and a bell | "oblong glass with gilding and a cross on top" | "gilt glass pyx with two bells and a cross on top" | "a gilt crown surrounded by thorns" |
| **relics** | thorn | Christopher; Birgitta; Paul Hermit; Barbara; Anthony abbot; Simplicius; Bernardine; many more fine relics. | Ursula's arm (large part); 11000 virgins (large part); Sebastian (2 large parts); unnamed piece. | Ambrose; Agnes; Gereon & companions; other nameless relics. | crown of thorns (small piece) |
| **saint(s) associated** | Christ | Anthony | Ursula? | | Crown of Thorns |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | crystal, silver? | crystal, silver? | glass, gold | glass, gilt silver | gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1470 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 265, 268; Liebgott 1982, 124. | SRD VIII, 262, 268; Liebgott 1982, 120. | SRD VIII, 261, 267; Liebgott 1982, 119. | SRD VIII, 265, 268; Liebgott 1982, 124-125. | SRD 8, 447; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 90. |

| | 181 | 182 | 183 | 184 | 185 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund | Lund | Lund | Lund | Lund |
| **type** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** |
| **details** | longish, four feet, text "maria ihesus" on top. | Calvary group on top. | crystal framed in gilt silver structure, painted images inside | crystal; silver part shaped as three towers | two small, hanging bells |
| **relics** | Philip; Jacob minor; Thadeus; John's grave; Matthew's rib; Paul's rib; Bartholomew. | Andrew; Thomas; Peter's cross | Petronilla; Mauricius; Virgin Mary's bed; others (c. 15) | apostles; Lawrence; Thomas Becket; abbot William | Holy cross |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | Holy cross |
| **size** | | "small" | "large" | | |
| **material** | gilt silver, crystal | gilt silver | gilt silver, crystal, parchment? | gilt silver, crystal | gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 | a-1488 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | Queen Dorothea (at least the relics) |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 448; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 92. | SRD 8, 448; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 91. | SRD 8, 447; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 91. | SRD 8, 447; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 90. | SRD 8, 447; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89-90. |

| | 186 | 187 | 188 | 189 | 190 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund | Lund | Lund | Lund | Lund |
| **type** | **monstrance/pyx, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** |
| **details** | Egg-shaped container; 2 nodes, four gilt "belts"; "like a monstrance" | Egg-shaped container; "like a monstrance" | Egg-shaped container, "like a monstrance" | Small, oblong crystal with a gilt foot and tower-shaped lid. | Large beryl container, foot and structure of pure gold. |
| **relics** | Catherine; Dionysius; Rusticus; Eleuterius; Calisto. | Holy cross; Lord's grave; Bartholomew; a holy virgin's hair; several saints. | Holy cross | Lawrence (a bone) | Jacob minor; Philip; Leo; Martha; Christina; Lawrencel; Canute's mantle. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | Lawrence | |
| **size** | | | | "small" | |
| **material** | ostrich egg?, gilt silver? | ostrich egg?, gilt silver? | ostrich egg?, gilt silver? | crystal, gilt silver | beryl, gold |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1478 | b-1475 | b-1474? | b-1470 | b-1376 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | Andreas Madsen, canon of Lund | Lady Christina at Gladsax | Canon Petrus Hermanni of Lund | | Queen Margrete on behalf of her son prince Olaf |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 451; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 98-99. | SRD 8, 451; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 99. | SRD 8, 451; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 99. | SRD 8, 451; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 100. | SD 10893; SRD 8, 454-455; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 105. |

| | 191 | 192 | 193 | 194 | 195 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund | Lund | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde cathedral | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** |
| **details** | "a crystal" | With a large crystal, mother-of-pearl, topaz and other gems. | Called "oculus" (eye), marked with a P. | "reliquary made like a monstrance" | "berillo" |
| **relics** | Lawrence; Christ; 3 kings; Cecilia; Agatha; Scolastica; 11000 virgins; Thomas Becket; tree of paradise; others. | | Francis's tunic; Magdalene; 11 000 virgins. | | Canute; Christ; many others (c. 30) |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | 92 lod | |
| **material** | crystal, silver? | crystal, mother-of-pearl, topaz, gems, silver? | glass or crystal?, silver? | gilt silver? | beryl |
| **dating (estimated)** | a-1470? | c. 1512-1518 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | Archbishop Birger Gundersen | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 456; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 106-107. | Axel-Nilsson 1989, 86. | SRD VIII, 1837, 276. | DK, Roskilde, 2641 | SRD VIII, 1837, 270. |

| | 196 | 197 | 198 | 199 | 200 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Visby (Our Lady) | Bergen (Dominican abbey) | Bergen (Apostelkirken) | Bergen (Apostelkirken) | Oslo, Mariakirken |
| **type** | **monstrance, 4** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** |
| **details** | "full or relics" | "a reliquary made like a monstrance" | | angel holding crystal. | two angels holding a crown. From Philip IV (France) to Håkon V (Norway) |
| **relics** | | | | fragment of Crown of thorns | thorn |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | Christ | Christ |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | | | gilt silver | crystal. silver? | gilt silver, gems |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1427 | | b-1523 | 1274 | 1304 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | France | France, Paris; Thiebaut l'Orfèvre |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | From Philip III (France) to Magnus Lagabote (Norway) | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Cronica Guthilandorum, 1978 (1633), 204. | DN 13:569 | Nicolaysen 1862-66, 428. | Johnsen 1965, 153; Nicolaysen 1862-66, 428. | Johnsen 1965, 151-156. |

| | 201 | 202 | 203 | 204 | 205 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Arnäs church | Linköping Cathedral | Skara | Stockholm / Uppsala | Uppsala |
| **type** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** |
| **details** | with six relics | | crystal supported by two angels | angel, crystal | foot of copper; upper part of crystal, golden Mary with sapphire on top |
| **relics** | | | thorn | thorn, other relics of Christ? | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | Christ | Christ | |
| **size** | | 6,5kg | | | 10kg |
| **material** | | silver | crystal, silver | silver?, crystal, gems? | crystal, gold, silver, gems, copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | | 1300 | 1288 | 1400s? |
| **origin/maker** | | | France | France | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | Philip IV to Magnus III; Birger Magnusson to Uppsala cathedral | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Lundén 1950, 163-164. | Källström 1939, 212. | Lundén 1983, 74–75. | SDHK 2435; SDHK 5307 | Källström 1939, 277 |

| | 206 | 207 | 208 | 209 | 210 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Uppsala Cathedral | Vadstena | Vadstena convent | Vadstena | Vadstena |
| **type** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 2** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** |
| **details** | | "vas cristallinum"; sold in 1540 | crystal reliquaries with silver; stolen in 1557 | "et skrin af cristallo med helghudomum" | "et kar af cristallo med dyrom stenom" |
| **relics** | | St Catherine's jawbone | | | Spinea corona; other relics of Our Lord |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Catherine of Vadstena | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | crystal | crystal, gold, silver | | crystal | crystal, gems |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1435 | 1400s | b-1557 | b-1346 | b-1346 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | King Magnus & Queen Blanche (intended donation) | King Magnus & Queen Blanche (intended donation) |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Bengtsson 2010, 148. | DV 884:14; Den stora kyrkofesten, 46–47; Silfverstolpe 1895-98, 13-15 | Silfverstolpe 1895-1898, 198 | SDHK 5307 | SDHK 5307 |

| | 211 | 212 | 213 | 214 | 215 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | F | D | D |
| **location** | Linköping (in a field) | Västerås cathedral | Naantali | Copenhagen (cathedral.) | Copenhagen (cathedral.) |
| **type** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance, 1** | **monstrance?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** |
| **details** | footed, egg-shaped crystal container (broken); gothic buttresses, lions, St Anne, Madonna, Christ | crystal cylinder in horizontal position in achitectural holder with animal feet, on a metal base | footed, pentagonal; decorative lattices with letters mar(ia) | "white egg with a pelican" | "new, white silver egg" |
| **relics** | | | / | 11000 virgins; Valerian's skull; finding place of Holy cross; flagellation; Mary's burial place; many others. | Many related to Christ; Olaf's flag; many relics whose names disappeared and got confused with each other. |
| **saint(s) associated** | Anne? | | Mary? | | |
| **size** | height 48,3 cm | 26,5x20,5x28cm | h: 53 cm | | |
| **material** | crystal, gilt silver | crystal, gilt copper | oak | | ostrich egg?, silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1450-1520? | b-1350 | | b-1515 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden? | Germany? | Finland? | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | SHM | Västerås cathedral | Naantali convent | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | 12 | | | | |
| **main sources** | Mörkfors 1987, 46; Nisbeth & Estham 2001, 81. | Hildebrand 1903, 634. | Nordman 1980, 95-96. | SRD VIII, 265, 268; Liebgott 1982, 124. | SRD VIII, 261, 267; Liebgott 1982, 119. |

| | 216 | 217 | 218 | 219 | 220 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (cathedral.) | Copenhagen (cathedral.) | Copenhagen (cathedral.) | Copenhagen (cathedral.) | Copenhagen (cathedral.) |
| **type** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** |
| **details** | "white, gilt egg" | "new silver pyx with a gilt cross on top" | "large calabash with gilt details, broken in the middle" | "small, completely gilt calabash" | Little calabash called "nap" (bowl), with gilt details along the edges (same as existing calabash pyx?). |
| **relics** | Gregory; Jerome; Moses' rod; others (c. 10) | Large part of Holy Cross; of the 11000 virgins. | Peter; Andrew; Bartholomew; Lawrence; George. | Hilary; Hubert; Clemens; Blasius; Scavianus; Eligius; Bernhard; Urban; 11000 virgins; others. | Holy cross; unnamed relics. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | "large" | "small" | "small" |
| **material** | ostrich egg?, gold | silver, partly gilt | calabash?, gilt silver | calabash?, gold? | calabash?, gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | /DNM? |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 261, 267; Liebgott 1982, 120. | SRD VIII, 262, 267. | SRD VIII, 263; Liebgott 1982, 122. | SRD VIII, 263; Liebgott 1982, 122. | SRD VIII, 263; Liebgott 1982, 122-123, 130. |

| | 221 | 222 | 223 | 224 | 225 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (cathedral.) | Copenhagen (cathedral.) | Copenhagen (cathedral.) | Copenhagen (cathedral.) | Copenhagen (cathedral.) |
| **type** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** |
| **details** | Black nut with a Death figure on top. | A completely gilt black nut. | Black nut with silver details and an acorn on the lid. | Black nut with silver and an U on the foot. | Black, gilt nut with crystals along edges and a new foot. |
| **relics** | 11000 virgins; Barbara; Lord's grave; many others. | Jacob minor; Nicholas' skull; Birgitta; others (c. 10) | Erasmus' bowel; Maurice&companions; Holy cross; other nameless relics. | Otto; Sunniva. | Felicitas; Florentius; Cosmas; Secundus. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | coconut?, silver? | coconut?, gold | coconut?, silver | coconut?, silver | coconut?, gold, crystal |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 262; Liebgott 1982, 120-121. | SRD VIII, 263; Liebgott 1982, 121. | SRD VIII, 263; Liebgott 1982, 122 | SRD VIII, 266, 268; Liebgott 1982, 127. | SRD VIII, 266, 268; Liebgott 1982, 126. |

| | 226 | 227 | 228 | 229 | 230 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, c. 23** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | "ostrich head" (probably egg) | | | | includes a bursa? ("in bursa pixidis...") |
| **relics** | Gengive of St Apollonia. | Anthony; 10 000 knights; Magdalene; Petrissa; anonymous | | Francis; Katarina; Jacob; Anthony; Canute. | Jacob; Eustace; Vincent; Erasmus; others (c. 10). |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | ostrich egg?, gilt silver? | gilt silver | | ivory | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 1837, 290. | SRD VIII, 1837, 284. | SRD VIII, 1837, 285-293. | SRD VIII, 1837, 286. | SRD VIII, 1837, 288. |

| | 231 | 232 | 233 | 234 | 235 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Lund | Lund | Lund | Lund |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | | | Copper lock; 4 copper rings on two sides; a handle on top. Suspended? | no metal parts | Copper nodus in the broken lid; four feet; copper lock. |
| **relics** | Holy Cross; Francis. | 16 different relics | (Calisto?;) Boniface; many others. | Peter's head and beard; Paul's hair; all apostles' clothes; Jacob's bone; Matthew's rib; Philip. | Mary's hair and clothes; Lord's shoes, sponge, grave and cradle; Manna from John's grave. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | "largest of 7" | "second largest of 7" | "third largest of 7" |
| **material** | copper | | ivory, copper | ivory | ivory, copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1458 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | canon Boecius Sommer, 11.3.1458 | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 1837, 290. | Axel-Nilsson 1989, 105; Dipl.Dioc.Lund.3 s.390 | SRD 8, 450; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 96. | SRD 8, 450; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 96. | SRD 8, 450; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 96. |

| | 236 | 237 | 238 | 239 | 240 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund | Lund | Lund | Lund | Lund |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | Small lid without lock, but with four hooks like on a book. | On the lid a silver ring with 3 silver chains; suspended? | Illustrated with images of a wheel and Easter lamb. | | Round alabaster bowl (communion cup?) with gilt structures above and below. Substituted by the pyx with lilies. |
| **relics** | Andrew; Ursula; Gereon; others (c. 15) | Florence (one of 11000); others whose names God knows. | Holy cross; Bartholomew; Hippolyte; 11000 virgins. | abbot Wilhelm | Lord's cradle; Lawrence's rib; Leo; Gregory; George. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | "fourth largest of 7" | "fifth largest of 7" | "small" | "smallest of 7" | |
| **material** | ivory, copper? | ivory, silver | ivory | ivory | alabaster, gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 450; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 98. | SRD 8, 451; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 98. | SRD 8, 451; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 98. | SRD 8, 451; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 98. | SRD 8, 449-450; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 95. |

| | 241 | 242 | 243 | 244 | 245 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund | Lund | Lund | Lund | Lund |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx?** | **pyx/pendant?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** |
| **details** | Gilt on top; 4 gilt lilies on the foot. Substituting the round alabaster bowl. | round, crystal with lid&foot of gilt silver | Round, suspended?, images and precious stones all over and below. | "an ivory tooth hanging under the large (>triumph) crucifix, and an egg on top of it" | Black nut with a foot and tower of silver. |
| **relics** | Lord's cradle; Lawrence's rib; Leo; Gregory; George. | Innocent children; many bones of the 11000 virgins; many others. | Christ; Magdalene; 11000 virgins; Canute; Ketil; others (c. 15) | Canute's hair; John Chrysostom; others (c. 10) | 11000 virgins: a jawbone. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | "large" | | | | |
| **material** | gilt silver? | crystal, gilt silver | gilt silver, gems | ivory, ostrich egg? | coconut?, silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | a-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1470 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 449-450; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 95. | SRD 8, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 95. | SRD 8, 448; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 92. | SRD 8, 454; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 103. | SRD 8, 455; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 106. |

| | 246 | 247 | 248 | 249 | 250 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund | Roskilde (cathedral) | Roskilde (cathedral) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **monstrance/pyx, 1** | **pyx, x** | **pyx, x** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | *pixidem cristallinam, in qva pars coste gloriosi martyris Laurentii contine(n)tur* | With a tall foot and a lid; many were painted red. | As wide top as bottom; cylindrical? Many painted red? | Marked with an A. | With text "AVE MARIA" in the foot; marked with a B. |
| **relics** | Lawrence's rib | | | Christ; St Nicholas; many others (c. 20) | 10 relics of St Francis; many others, including 10000 militum |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | crystal, silver? | wood, some with metal parts | wood, some with metal parts | wood | coconut?, silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1228 | | | b-1500 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | archbishop Andreas Sunesen | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 3,, 524 | DK: Roskilde, 1641. | DK: Roskilde, 1641. | SRD VIII, 1837, 270. | SRD VIII, 1837, 271. |

| | 251 | 252 | 253 | 254 | 255 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | Marked with a C. | With copper top and foot; marked with a G. | Marked with an H. | Red, "in gravo" (engraved?), marked with a K. | Marked with an L. |
| **relics** | 11 000 virgins; Christina; Juliana; 4 Christ relics; Mary's cloth; Anna's bone; Abraham. | Mary's hair and tomb; Holy Cross; others (c. 15) | many, incl. Canute, many virgin saints, John Baptist's gengive. | many, mainly popes&bishops. | Magdalene's bones and cloth; Olaf; Christ's circumcision cloth; Catherine. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | ostrich egg, silver? | coconut, copper | coconut, gilt silver | wood? | ivory, silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 1837, 272. | SRD VIII, 1837, 274. | SRD VIII, 1837, 274. | SRD VIII, 1837, 275. | SRD VIII, 1837, 275. |

| | 256 | 257 | 258 | 259 | 260 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | marked with an M. | With an image of St Francis on top; marked with an S. | Marked with a T. | Red, called VAS VITREUM, marked with an X. | With an upper and lower space; marked with the letter A. |
| **relics** | Agatha; Wilhelm; Holy Cross; others (c. 10) | measure of Mary's belt from heaven; Jacob; Ingerd; John Evangelist. | Servatius; Christ; others (c. 15) | many, mainly bishops etc., males. | Christ; Mary; many others (c. 20 in upper, c. 30 in lower part) |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Francis? | | | |
| **size** | | | "large" | | |
| **material** | ivory, gilt silver | coconut, silver? | copper | wood, glass? | copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500? |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 1837, 276. | SRD VIII, 1837, 277. | SRD VIII, 1837, 277. | SRD VIII, 1837, 279. | SRD VIII, 293. |

| | 261 | 262 | 263 | 264 | 265 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | S |
| **location** | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Sorö | Visby (Our Lady) | Viborg | Ekebyborna |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx/bursa?, 2** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** |
| **details** | With an upper and lower space; marked with the letter X. | "pixidem argenteam cum reliquiis" | "Byss" | "ovum strutionis" | |
| **relics** | Lord's grave; Elisabeth; Bartholomew; Magdalene; others (c. 10 in lower, c. 5 in upper part) | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | | silver | ivory | ostrich egg, silver? | coconut?, silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500? | b-1200 | b-1427 | | |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | archbishop Absalon of Lund | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 302. | SDHK 288 | Cronica Guthilandorum, 1978 (1633), 203. | Petersen 1888, 112 | Källström 1939, 166 |

| | 266 | 267 | 268 | 269 | 270 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Eskilstuna | Kristberg | Lödöse | Skänninge, Vårfrukyrkan | Stora Åby |
| **type** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** |
| **details** | "black ostrich egg" | bones inside | | | |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | 12 lmk | |
| **material** | ostrich egg, silver | coconut?, gilt silver | ostrich egg, silver? | coconut?, gilt silver | coconut?, silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1534 | | b-1529 | | |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 169. | Källström 1939, 204. | af Ugglas 1935, 26; Källström 1939, 218 | Källström 1939, 248 | Källström 1939, 260 |

| | 271 | 272 | 273 | 274 | 275 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Strängnäs | Uppsala Cathedral | Uppsala Cathedral | Vadstena | Vreta abbey |
| **type** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx?, 3** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | "a large mother-of-pearl in gilt silver" | in the choir of the Souls | Footed, with the coat-of-arms of donor engraved .In the choir of St Peter & Paul. | "gams aegg med helghudomum", | "pixidem argenteam cum reliquiis" |
| **relics** | "many" | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | mother-of-pearl, gilt silver | | gilt silver | ostrich egg?, silver? | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1504 | b-1435 | 1452 - 1475 | b-1346 | b-1321 |
| **origin/maker** | | | Uppsala? | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | Märta Lydekadotter Stralendorp (gave two silver bowls) | King Magnus & Queen Blanche (intended) | Ingrid Svantepolksdotter |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 261 | Bengtsson 2010, 148. | Bengtsson 2010, 148. | SDHK 5307 | SD 3075 |

| | 276 | 277 | 278 | 279 | 280 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | F | D | D |
| **location** | Västerås cathedral | Örberga | Naantali | Copenhagen? | Lund |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 4** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | | | | footed, made of calabash with a tower on top, with "haffnis" written on the calabash (same as listed calabash pyx?) | Octagonal; gilt silver around edges; reliefs of Apostles, Madonna, John the Baptist, St Anthony. |
| **relics** | | | | | Lord's grave; Sunniva; a chin with 4 teeth of one of the Selje martyrs; Thomas Becket. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | 25 cm | 8,2cm x 8,6-9,9cm |
| **material** | | coconut?, silver | black ostrich egg, silver | calabash, gilt copper | ivory, gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1317 | | | c. 1500? | 1418-1428 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | Denmark? | Norway, Bergen? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | bishop Israel | | | | Aslak Bolt, bishop of Bergen. |
| **where now** | / | / | / | DNM | LUHM |
| **cat.nr** | | | | 10353 | 4409 |
| **main sources** | SDHK 2807 | Källström 1939, 308 | Källström 1939, 319 | Jexlev 1976, 43–44 | SRD 8, 450; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 95-96 |

| | 281 | 282 | 283 | 284 | 285 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Slagelse, St Michael's church | unknown | Frustuna | Guldrupe church | Ignaberga church |
| **type** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** |
| **details** | footed, chapel-shaped; a large calvary group on top | A pear-shaped tree-root container with a silver foot, a high silver lid, and a silver miniature chapel attached on the side. | cylindrical, with lid; late Gothic, has been covered with black velvet. Found inside altar | round, with lid; painted red. Found inside altar | round, pot-like, lid missing; painted blue-green and golden ornamental pattern. Found inside altar |
| **relics** | | | | Vociferus, Theban legion | lead box with fragments of bone, textile, parchment "reliqe sca…" |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | c. 10,7 x 5,8 cm | 6,1 x 4,2cm | c. 4,5 x 4 cm | c. 4,5 x 3,2 cm |
| **material** | | wood, gilt silver | wood, velvet | | hardwood |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1300s? | late medieval | 1300s? | | 1100-1250 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | DNM | SHM | SHM | Gotlands Fornsal | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | | 530:6 | 10496 | GFDEP225 | 18476 |
| **main sources** | | Hildebrand 1903, 635; af Ugglas 1939, 96-97; Axel-Nilsson 1955, 49-50. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 30. | Roosval 1928, 39. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 29. |

| | 286 | 287 | 288 | 289 | 290 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Lilla Ryttern church | Linköping Cathedral | Mölltorp church | Norra Solberga | Vadstena |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx?, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | Footed, six-sided; tower-like lid; engraving referring to "sacrarium reliquiarum" both in container and foot. | Round, footed, covered with embroidered textile, traces of silver decorations. Lid missing. | rectangular | round. Found inside altar. | cylindrical container with painted foot; embroidered decorations and inscription referring to a head reliquary |
| **relics** | | | Birgitta, Helen of Skövde, 11000 virgins | | one of martyr Gereon's companions |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Katarina of Vadstena? | | | |
| **size** | 43,5cm | 38,5cm | 7,5 x 3,8 x 2,5 cm | 7,5 x 9 cm | 34,7cm |
| **material** | gilt copper | wood, silk, linen | wood | wood | wood, silk, linen |
| **dating (estimated)** | 14th century | c.1515 | | | mid-1400 |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden? | Vadstena | | | Vadstena |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | SHM | Linköping CathedralMuseum | Västergötlands museum | Jönköpings läns museum | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | 1699 | 3920 | 86507 | 113 | 349:2 |
| **main sources** | Hildebrand 1903, 643. | Nisbeth & Estham 2001, 124–131; Lindqvist Sandgren & Wahlberg 2018, 184-195. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 30. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 30. | Estham 1991, 30–33 |

| | 291 | 292 | 293 | 294 | 295 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | F |
| **location** | Vadstena | Vadstena | Visingsö, Brahe church | Vänge church | Turku |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | cylindrical container with painted foot, embroidered, fruit patterns,, inscription referring to relics | cylindrical, footed container covered with dark velvet, decorated with silver paillettes | Double curved container with a crown on top; handle and foot of gilt silver | footed, lid missing | footed, roundish, with lid; text "Ave Maria gratia plena dominus t" in foot (reliquary status uncertain) |
| **relics** | "God's precious saints" | Christ, Mary, Anne | | none | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Mary? | | none | |
| **size** | 31cm | 27,5cm | 19,8cm | c. 14,5 cm | 32,5 cm |
| **material** | wood, silk, linen | wood, velvet, silver | coconut, gilt silver | coconut, gilt copper | gilt copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | mid-1400 | mid-1400 | late medieval | 1350-1499 | 14th century |
| **origin/maker** | Vadstena | Vadstena | Germany | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | SHM | SHM | Brahe church? | SHM | TCM |
| **cat.nr** | 349:1 | 349:3 | | 4954 | 874 |
| **main sources** | Estham 1991, 30–33 | Estham 1991, 30–33 | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 25. | | Immonen 2009b, 55-56. |

| | 296 | 297 | 298 | 299 | 300 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | F | F | F | F | F |
| **location** | Turku | Turku | Turku | Somero | Lammi |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** | **pyx, 1** |
| **details** | footed, with lid; (reliquary status uncertain) | footed, with lid; pear-shaped, painted wooden container. (reliquary status uncertain) | footed, roundish, with lid; container shaped like coconut shell; cross on top of lid. (reliquary status uncertain) | footed, tower-like container engraved like a brick house with windows, lid like a roof (reliquary status uncertain) | engraved with Pietá, Johns Evangelist & Baptist, St Peter&Paul, St Andrew; lid like roof (reliquary status uncertain) |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | 35 cm | 28,7 cm | 40,5 cm | 33,7 x 9,5 cm | 34,7 x 8,5 cm |
| **material** | gilt silver | gilt brass, wood | gilt brass, wood | gilt copper | gilt copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | c. 1500 | | 14th century | b-1516 | |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | TCM | TCM | TCM | FHA | FHA |
| **cat.nr** | 872 | 875 | 873 | 5115 | 4410 |
| **main sources** | | Immonen 2009b, 56. | Immonen 2009b, 56. | Immonen 2009b, 57. | Immonen 2009b, 57-58. |

| | 301 | 302 | 303 | 304 | 305 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | F | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Viipuri | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **pyx, 1** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa, 1** |
| **details** | (reliquary status uncertain) | | Red. | Inside or attached to a pyx ("in bursa pixidis...") | "green bursa", one of 4 bursas located inside a reliquary and containing a reliquary tablet and two ampullae? |
| **relics** | | (c. 60 different relics) | Philip; Maurice; Francis; two unknown martyrs. | Lord's grave; Martha; Seraphia; Botvid. | Oil of St Nicholas in two glass ampullae; a tablet with relics of Holy Cross and St Andrew |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | silver | silk? | silk? | silk? | |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1400s | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | FHA | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | | SRD VIII, 1837, 283. | SRD VIII, 1837, 288. | SRD VIII, 1837, 289. | SRD VIII, 304. |

| | 306 | 307 | 308 | 309 | 310 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan conv.) | Roskilde (Franciscan conv.) | Roskilde (Franciscan conv.) |
| **type** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa, 2** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa, 5** |
| **details** | "long bursa", one of 4 bursas located inside a reliquary. | Two of 4 bursas located inside a reliquary. | With letter B. | Gleaming (or greyish?) and red. | |
| **relics** | Gereon; Lord's grave; Jacob; Paulo; Holy cross; anonymous relics. | | Catherine; Gereon; Birgitta; Christ; others (c. 10) | Lord's grave; Barnabas; others (c. 10) | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | | | gold | | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 304. | SRD VIII, 304-305. | SRD VIII, 295. | SRD VIII, 295. | SRD VIII, 295-296; 301; 305-306. |

| | 311 | 312 | 313 | 314 | 315 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | N | N | N |
| **location** | Roskilde (Franciscan conv.) | unknown | unknown | Borgund, Sogn og Fjordane | More og Romsdal |
| **type** | **bursa, 4** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa/casket, 1** | **bursa, 2** | **bursa, 1** |
| **details** | Four bursas inside a casket. | A folded leather pouch with relics | insular spiral patterns; engraved Viking name Rannvaig in rune script | small silk pouches, found behind altar | house-like shape; lozenge patterns, damaged |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | 13,5x10x5,3 cm | 8-10 cm | |
| **material** | | leather; velvet and silver thread | wood, silver-gilt bronze, gems | silk | wood, bronze? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | 15th century | 8th century | | 700s |
| **origin/maker** | | Denmark? | Ireland/scotland | Norway? | Ireland/Scotland |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | DNM | DNM | OMCH | Vitenskapsmuseet |
| **cat.nr** | | 10371 | 9084 | 5319c | T18198 |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 301. | | Fett 1909, 45–48; Grinder-Hansen 2002, 11 | | Fett 1909, 45–48; Grinder-Hansen 2002, 11 |

| | 316 | 317 | 318 | 319 | 320 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | S | S | F | D |
| **location** | Melhus | Uppsala | Vadstena | Turku | Roskilde Cathedral |
| **type** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa, 1** | **bursa, 1** | **apple, 1** |
| **details** | house-like shape; insular spiral patterns, partly enameled with checkered patterns | a pouch decorated with gold patterns | a pouch decorated with gilt silver paillettes. 12 relics with authenticas and list inside. | a pouch with relics inside | A pomander or an apple-shaped reliquary? |
| **relics** | | Eric | Mary, Peter, Andrew, James, Philip, Gregory, Martin, Bernhard, Ansgar, etc. | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | St Eric | | | |
| **size** | | | 19cm | | |
| **material** | bronze/copper? | Italian silk brocade (red) | velvet (violet) | linen (blue, red, green) | silver-gilt |
| **dating (estimated)** | 700s | | 15th c. | | b-1257 |
| **origin/maker** | Ireland/scotland | Italy/Sweden? | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | Ingrid af Regenstein |
| **where now** | Vitenskapsmuseet | Uppsala Cathedral? | SHM | TCM | / |
| **cat.nr** | T8144 | | 281 | | |
| **main sources** | Fett 1909, 45–48; Grinder-Hansen 2002, 11 | Estham 2010, 250 | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 26. | Rinne 1932, 314–316 | DK, Roskilde, 1640 |

| | 321 | 322 | 323 | 324 | 325 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen cathedral | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen cathedral | Copenhagen cathedral | Copenhagen cathedral |
| **type** | **star, 1** | **boat, 1** | **boat, 1** | **boat, 1** | **boat, 1** |
| **details** | star | "with candle-holder" | "or candle-holder" | A new "liburno". | "liburno" marked with A. |
| **relics** | Jacob major's skull (complete?) | Nicholas; Andrew; Peter; Canute; others (c. 10). | Lucia; Francis; Bartholomew, Lawrence; others (c. 20). | Bartholomew; Bernhard; Kjeld (2 parts); Catherine; Barbara. | Sebastian (2 pieces); Olaf's death stone. |
| **saint(s) associated** | Jacob | | | | |
| **size** | | | | "small" | |
| **material** | silver | | | silver | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1515 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 266, 268; Liebgott 1982, 125. | SRD VIII, 1837, 288. | SRD VIII, 1837, 285. | SRD VIII, 263; Liebgott 1982, 122. | SRD VIII, 266; Liebgott 1982, 126. |

| | 326 | 327 | 328 | 329 | 340 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | S | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen cathedral | Växjö cathedral | Unknown Dominican abbey, Scania | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) |
| **type** | **boat, 1** | **boat, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** |
| **details** | "liburno" marked with B in the foot/base. | "helgedomakar", reliquary or navicula? "shaped like a boat" | | "old" | "new" |
| **relics** | Stephen; Ursula; Holy cross. | | Holy Cross | Holy Cross | Holy cross (large part) |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | Christ |
| **size** | | | | "large" | |
| **material** | | "white", ivory? silver? (not gilt) | gold | | gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1541 | b-1304 | | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | Cecilia Kalf | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 266, 268; Liebgott 1982, 126. | Källström 1939, 302. | Erslev 1901, 51 | DK: Kbh, 137; SRD VIII, 260, 26 | SRD VIII, 264; Liebgott 1982, 123. |

| | 341 | 342 | 343 | 344 | 345 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Lund cathedral |
| **type** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** |
| **details** | "with five crystals" | "with a crystal in the middle" | | "in capella" | With recious stone insets and a wooden foot; in an "opening", two other crosses and the relics. |
| **relics** | Holy cross; others. | Juninus; nameless relics. | many; Holy Cross+7 of Christ; also Nordic saints | Holy Cross; Crown of Thorns. | Holy cross (11 fragments) |
| **saint(s) associated** | Christ | | | | Holy cross |
| **size** | "small" | | "larger" | "large" | "smaller" |
| **material** | silver?, crystal | silver, crystal | silver | | silver?, gems, wood, crystal? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1470 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 266, 268; Liebgott 1982, 127 | SRD VIII, 266; Liebgott 1982, 127. | SRD VIII, 1837, 282. | SRD VIII, 1837, 289. | SRD 8, 446; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89. |

| | 346 | 347 | 348 | 349 | 350 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Ribe |
| **type** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** |
| **details** | With precious stone insets and gilt copper foot. | Attached to a wooden crucifix. | | precious stone insets | called "lignum domini" |
| **relics** | column of flagellation | Holy cross; stone on which Christ sweated blood; stone of his ascension. | Many unknown saints. | Holy cross | Holy cross? |
| **saint(s) associated** | Christ | Holy cross | | Holy cross | Holy cross |
| **size** | "larger" | "small" | "small" | "small" (13,5 lmk) | |
| **material** | gilt silver?, gems, gilt copper | silver | silver | gold, c. 100 gems (sapphire, emerald, amethyst, ruby) | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1470 | b-1470 | b-1458? | 1406 | b-1312 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | Hans Klingenberg | Canon Boecius Sommer | Queen Margrete (at Erik of Pommern's wedding) | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 446; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89. | SRD 8, 451; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 99-100. | SRD 8, 455; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 105. | SRD 8, 447; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 89. | Ribe Oldemoder, 115 |

| | 351 | 352 | 353 | 354 | 355 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde cathedral | Visby (Our Lady) |
| **type** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** |
| **details** | With 5 stones/gems; marked with a Y. | | | | |
| **relics** | many; Holy Cross + 6 of Christ; many Nordics: Wilhelm, Olaf, Canute, (Katarina). | not listed | not listed | Holy Cross, *multis aliis* | Holy cross |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | Christ | Holy cross |
| **size** | "small" | "small" | "small" | 31 mark lödig silver | "small" |
| **material** | silver, gems | | | gilt silver | gold |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1563 | b-1427 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | Bishop Jacobus Thepp | Vicar Marquardus Moorn from Lübeck | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 1837, 280. | SRD VIII, 1837, 281. | SRD VIII, 1837, 281. | DK, Roskilde, 1641 | Cronica Guthilandorum, 1978 (1633), 204. |

| | 356 | 357 | 358 | 359 | 360 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Bergen | Konghelle | Nidaros | Nidaros | Stavanger |
| **type** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** |
| **details** | | to house a cross relic given by king Balduin in Jerusalem | processional cross, carried around in coronations and in feasts of St Olaf | with "cleyne parlekens" - small pearls? | relic under a "crystal stone" |
| **relics** | | Holy Cross | Holy Cross | some | Holy cross |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | Christ |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | silver | | | | gilt silver?, crystal |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1523 | c. 1127 | 13th century | b-1521 | b-1517 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | Norway? | Norway? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | Sigurd Jorsalafar | | archbishop Erik Walkendorf left it in Amsterdam | relic purchased in Rome by bishop Hoskold. |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Nicolaysen 1862-66, 428. | Heimskringla: Saga of Sigurd, Eysteinn and Olaf, ch. 19 | Molland 1982, 52 | DN VII:604 | DN IV: 1074. |

| | 361 | 362 | 363 | 364 | 365 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Enköping hospital | Linköping | Sigtuna St Mary church | Uppsala Cathedral | Vadstena abbey church |
| **type** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** |
| **details** | "paruam crvcem deauratam cum reliquiis" | | venerated at the Cross altar | | With a text stating it contents; to be placed on main altar. |
| **relics** | | | Holy Cross | | Holy cross |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | Holy Cross | | Holy cross |
| **size** | small | | | | |
| **material** | gilt silver? | gilt silver | | silver | silver, crystal? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1407 | b-1283 | b-1290 | b-1444 | b-1346 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | bishop Henrik to his successor | | | King Magnus (intended) |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SHDK 16923 | SDHK 1248 | SDHK 1493 | Bengtsson 2010, 184. | SDHK 5307 |

| | 366 | 367 | 368 | 369 | 370 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | S | F | F | F |
| **location** | Nörre Nissum | Östra Ryd | Föglö | Lempäälä | Masku |
| **type** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** | **cross, 1** |
| **details** | | plant motives, crystal window for relics in the middle | clover forms, Evangelist and Mary initials; a silk bundle with bone/wood fragments and authentica inside | clover forms, text "pax vobiscum" under a crystal; a five-fold, hinged relic niche in the middle of reverse side | clover forms, Evangelist initials; inside space divided in 5, empty |
| **relics** | | Holy cross? | Mary Magdalene | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | Mary Magdalene | Holy cross? | |
| **size** | | 34,8cm | 6x5,3x0,5cm | 28,5cm | 29,5cm |
| **material** | | gilt copper, crystal | silver | wood, gilt copper, crystal | gilt copper/brass |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1536 | b-1450 | | 15th century | 15th century |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | DNM | SHM | Ålands museum | FHA | FHA |
| **cat.nr** | | 3393:3 | 4021:1-5 | 360 | |
| **main sources** | Lindahl 1988, 204 | Immonen 2009a, 175 | Dreijer 1967, 16; Ringbom 2010, 33; Immonen 2009a, 179; Immonen 2009b, 72. | Immonen 2007b, 4-5; Immonen 2009a, 174-175, 178-179; Immonen 2009b, 70-71. | Immonen 2009a, 174; Immonen 2009b, 71. |

| | 371 | 372 | 373 | 374 | 375 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | S | S | S | F |
| **location** | Roskilde | Linköping Cathedral | Riseberga (cistercian abbey) | Uppsala | Naantali |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant?, 1** | **cross / pendant?, 1** | **cross / pendant?, 1** | **cross / pendant?, 1** |
| **details** | with chain | contained a relic of the True cross | commissioned to be made from golden buckles or brooches; possibly with a chain | | A gilt cross with a relic. |
| **relics** | Lawrence | Holy cross | Holy Cross | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Holy cross | Christ | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | gold | gold | gold | gold | gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1434 | 14th century | 1322 | b-1360 | b-1449 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | dean Laurencius Nikolai to Esger | | Katarina, wife of Nils Björnsson, to the abbess | from Ingeborg Eskilsdotter to her daughter | from Lucia Olafsdotter to Bishop of Turku |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Erslev 1901, 207 | | SDHK 3166; Källström 1939, 235 | DS 5880 | DF 2818 |

| | 376 | 377 | 378 | 379 | 380 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | unknown | unknown | unknown, Gotland | Gundslevmagle, Nordfalster | Hejdeby, Råby, Gotland |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** |
| **details** | trefoil cross arms; Christ in relief | enameled with Christ figure; seven relic spaces | Angular, engraved Christ and Maria orans | image of Christ Majesty, two Apostle busts; circle medallions in the ends of cross-arms. Only front survives. | |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Christ | Christ | | | |
| **size** | 9,5x8,2x0.6 c m | | 4,5cm | 9,1 x 6,4 cm | |
| **material** | gilt silver | brass | copper | silver | bronze |
| **dating (estimated)** | 15th century | | 1100-1200 | 10th - 11th century | |
| **origin/maker** | Denmark? | | Byzantine or Russian? | Byzantium | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | DNM | DNM | SHM | DNM | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | 9900 | 10348 | 2976 | 11690 | 4531:d |
| **main sources** | | | Salin 1893, 299-300. | Lindahl 1990, 6-8 | |

| | 381 | 382 | 383 | 384 | 385 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund | Middelfart | Orö | Randers, Ålum | Ringsted, St Bendt? |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Only one half survives. | Rounded ends, with a gilt chain. Figures of Christ, Madonna, evangelist symbols, apostles Paul and Simon, St Christopher | Angular. Engraved images of Christ, Mary; words ISACO, Olafcununce. Golden chain with animal heads. | Insular spirals, male figure ("not Christ"). Only the reverse side exists. | "Dagmar cross", associated to Queen Dagmar. Enameled figure of Christ; Christ and four saints in bust medallions on reverse. |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | Olaf? | | John the Baptist, St Basilios, St Crysostomos |
| **size** | 82x61x5 mm | 9,5 x 8 cm | | 7,4 x 6,9 cm | 3,4x2,9x0,3cm |
| **material** | gilt bronze | gilt silver | gold | gilt and enameled bronze | gold, partly enameled |
| **dating (estimated)** | c. 1300? | c.1500 | 12th century? | 9th century? | 1000-1200 |
| **origin/maker** | | | Scandinavia? | Northumberland? | Byzantium |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | Kulturen museum | DNM | DNM | DNM | DNM |
| **cat.nr** | KM 77714:352 | D12258 | 10861 | D12124 | |
| **main sources** | Wahlöö 1998, 95-97. | | Lindahl 1990, 4-5. | Lindahl 1990, 2-4 | Lindahl 1990, 1-10 |

| | 386 | 387 | 388 | 389 | 390 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Roskilde cathedral | Yting, Gotland | Östermarie, Bornholm | Östermarie, Bornholm | Östermarie, Bornholm |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Two horizontal cross-arms, gems. Found inside a wooden Christ's head. | Angular cross, engraved images of Christ standing, blessing and Maria orans | rounded ends, | Rounded ends, With a silver chain. Christ, Mary and saints in bust medallions. | Angular, engraved cross, damaged; only front part remains. |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | 6,4 cm | 78,7x45,7x3,5 | 9 cm | 9 cm |
| **material** | gold, gems, pearls | silver | silver, remains of enamel | silver, remains of enamel | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | 12th century | 1100-1200 | | 11th century? | 12th century? |
| **origin/maker** | Byzantium | Kiev? | | Byzance/Kiev? | Scandinavia? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | DNM | SHM | Bornholms museum | Bornholms museum | Bornholms museum |
| **cat.nr** | | 3574 | 3710X00060-05 | 3710X00030 | 3710X00030 |
| **main sources** | | Salin 1893, 310. | | | |

| | 391 | 392 | 393 | 394 | 395 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | unknown | unknown | unknown | Drammen | Drammen |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Trefoil cross-arms; rectangular, framed middle with St Olaf in relief. | Trefoil cross-arms with hanging decorations; rectangular, framed middle with calvary group in low relief. | Quatrefoil arms, Christ face, evangelist symbols, letters, foliage. | Christ in relief, God's face; trefoil cross-arms with hanging decorations | Christ and evangelist symbols in relief; trefoil cross arms |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | 9cm | 7,8cm |
| **material** | silver, partly gilt | silver | gilt silver | gilt silver | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | late 15th century | late 15th century | 15th-16th century | 1400s-1500s | 1400s-1500s |
| **origin/maker** | Norway | Norway | | Norway | Norway |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | OMCH | OMCH | OMCH | OMCH | OMCH |
| **cat.nr** | | | | C63 | C62 |
| **main sources** | Kielland 1927, fig. 277. | Kielland 1927, fig. 278. | | Kielland 1927, fig. 329. | Kielland 1927, fig. 330. |

| | 396 | 397 | 398 | 399 | 400 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Jölster, Sogn og Fjordane | Lervik, Sogn og Fjordane | Lillehammer | Myrvoll, Öystre Slidre | Nordfjord, Sogn og Fjordane |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Christ and evangelist symbols in relief; reverse side engraved; trefoil cross-ends with suspended round medallions | Trefoil cross arms with engraved vegetal pattern; rectangular middle with calvary group in relief. | Trefoil cross arms with engraved images; rectangular middle with crowned king in relief. | Calvary group, evangelist symbols; inside space divided in 5, had textile relic | Calvary group; letter M with pierced heart and foliage; dragon-head chain. |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | 7,2cm | | | 8,5cm | |
| **material** | silver, partly gilt | silver | silver | silver, partly gilt | silver, partly gilt |
| **dating (estimated)** | 13th century | 15th century | | 15th-16th century | 13th-14th century |
| **origin/maker** | Norway? | Bergen? | Norway? | Norway? | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | OMCH | Bergen museum | OMCH | OMCH | OMCH |
| **cat.nr** | C 10202 | | C2213 | C21378 | C 10201 |
| **main sources** | | Kielland 1927, fig. 311. | | Kielland 1927, fig. 275. | |

| | 401 | 402 | 403 | 404 | 405 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Selbu, Sör-Tröndelag | Tinne, Notodden | Heddal, Notodden, Telemark | Telemark | Groven, Vinje, Telemark |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Trefoil cross-arms with no pattern; framed, rectangular middle with calvary group in relief. | Square middle with Christ, Mary, John, and evangelist symbols in relief; trefoil cross arms | Calvary group, Evangelist symbols, dragon heads | trefoil cross ends; square middle with Calvary group in relief; Madonna and saint on reverse side. | trefoil cross arms, engraved ornaments; quadratic middle w/ Calvary relief; on reverse: evangelists, St. Olaf. Dragon-head chain. |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | 9x8 cm | 8,2cm | | 8,2 cm, chain 52,5 cm | 9,6cm |
| **material** | silver | silver | gilt silver | gilt silver | silver, partly gilt |
| **dating (estimated)** | 15th century | 1400s? | | 15th century | 13th century |
| **origin/maker** | Bergen? | Norway? | Norway, Bergen? | Norway? | Norway? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | Nordic Museum | OMCH | NMCH | NMCH | OMCH |
| **cat.nr** | 38911 | C38124 | NF.09460-001 | NF.2004-0361 | C2213 |
| **main sources** | Kielland 1927, fig. 312. | Kielland 1927, fig. 310. | | | |

| | 406 | 407 | 408 | 409 | 410 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Langnes, Tromsö | Tromsö | Tysfjord, Lödingen | Tysfjord, Kjöpsvik | Tönsberg, Storgaten, near Mariakirke |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** |
| **details** | engraved Christ | angular, engraved cross with Christ and Maria Orans with two bust medallions. Chain with dragon heads. | Quatrefoil cross, Christ, St Anne with Madonna, letters INRI, IMB, IHS MAR ANA HELF | Christ, God's hand, Mary | two horizontal cross-arms. A splinter of wood visible through a cross-shaped window. Gems. |
| **relics** | | | | | Holy cross |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | Holy cross |
| **size** | | | 5,6cm | 10,5cm | 7cm |
| **material** | silver? | silver | silver | silver, partly enameled | silver, partly gilt, amethysts |
| **dating (estimated)** | | 12th century? | 15th-16th century | 1000s | |
| **origin/maker** | Norway? | Norway? | Norway? | Norway? | Byzance? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | Tromsö museum | Tromsö museum | OMCH | Tromsö museum | OMCH |
| **cat.nr** | Ts11784 6 | | C 3435 | | C23299 |
| **main sources** | | | Kielland 1927, fig. 331. | Kielland 1927, fig. 25-26. | |

| | 411 | 412 | 413 | 414 | 415 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Börringe abbey | Dörby, Norra Möckleby, Öland | Gamla Uppsala | Gullunge, Skederid | Gåtebo, Bredsätra, Öland |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Trefoil cross ends; relief images of Christ, God, coronation of Mary, Ap. Andreas, St Barbara?. | Rounded cross ends; cast relief image of Christ, on reverse five bust medallions. Had dragon heads from a lost chain. | Found in a silver depot. Relief image of Christ, on reverse five bust medallions. Chain with dragon heads | Found in a silver depot. Angular cross, engraved primitive Christ. Chain with dragon heads. | Found in a silver depot. Curved cross. Engraved Christ with Celtic patterns, on reverse five bust medallions. Chain with dragon heads |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | 4,5 x 4 x 0.9 cm | 7,7 cm | | chain ca 101 cm | 8,3 cm; chain ca 104 cm |
| **material** | silver | silver | silver | | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | early 15th c. | 10th century? | 10th century? | | 11th century |
| **origin/maker** | | Scandinavia / Kiev? | Scandinavia? | Scandinavia? | Sweden? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | SHM | SHM | SHM | SHM | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | 23260 | 1672 | 8889 | 16136:3 | 100 |
| **main sources** | af Ugglas 1944, 30-35. | Andersson 1967, 36-38. | Andersson 1967, 36-38. | Zachrisson 1998, 205-206. | Andersson 1967, 34-43. |

| | 416 | 417 | 418 | 419 | 420 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Horn, Marum | Hovgården, Vansö | Hökhuvud, Uppland | Persberg, Färnebo | Sigtuna |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross/pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Narrow, simple shape; engraved Christ on the cross, his torture instruments on the other side. Inside space divided in 8, empty | Simple shape; filigran ornaments, image of Christ on the cross; formerly enameled. | symbols, on the other side St. Margaret, Misericord, Madonna, Apostle John, St. George. Found inside altarpiece. | Trefoil cross ends; engraved image of Christ on the cross, Madonna on the other side; Evangelist symbols in the ends | |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Christ | Christ | Christ, St. Margaret? | Christ, Mary | |
| **size** | 5cm | 4cm | 7,7x6,7x1,5cm | 8,9x5,9cm | |
| **material** | gold | gold | gilt copper | silver | |
| **dating (estimated)** | early 16th century | a-1450 | a-1450 | late medieval | c.1100 |
| **origin/maker** | | | North Germany? | | Byzance? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | SHM | SHM | SHM? | SHM | Sigtuna museum |
| **cat.nr** | 898 | 2247 | | 24060 | |
| **main sources** | af Ugglas 1944, 33. | af Ugglas 1937, 179. | Thordeman&Källström&Rydbeck 1951, 27-28.; SK 75, 790-791. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 27. | |

| | 421 | 422 | 423 | 424 | 425 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | F |
| **location** | Riddarholmen, Stockholm | Stora Uppåkra | Torstorp, Västergötland | Vansö, Södermanland | Halikko |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **cross / pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Trefoil cross ends; engraved images of Mary and the Christ | Simple shape; filigran around margins; | Damaged. Round shapes. Standing figure in the middle. | Crucified Christ, filigran ornaments. | Angular, with engraved figures |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Christ | Christ, Mary? | Christ | |
| **size** | 5,3 cm | | 5,7cm | 4 cm | |
| **material** | gold | gilt bronze | gilt bronze | gold, enamel | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | 16th c. | 1000s? | c. 110 | late 15th C. | |
| **origin/maker** | | Germany? | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | SHM | LUHM | SHM | SHM | FHA |
| **cat.nr** | 3715 | LUHM 31000:1600 | 20059 | 2247 | KM2570:2 |
| **main sources** | af Ugglas 1944, 33. | Karlsson 2015a, 40-41. | Salin 1893, 310. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 28. | |

| | 426 | 427 | 428 | 429 | 430 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | F | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Halikko | Falsterbo, Skåne | Skara | Stockholm | Strängnäs |
| **type** | **cross / pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **bursa?/ pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Angular, with engraved figures | round, IHS and another monogram | A chain with a reliquary | | triangular with a golden chain |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Christ | | | |
| **size** | | 2,5cm | | | |
| **material** | silver | silver | silver? | | gold |
| **dating (estimated)** | | late medieval | b-1533 | b-1470 | b-1504 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | from king Karl Knutsson to his son Karl | |
| **where now** | FHA | LUHM | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | KM2570:2 | 1674 | | | |
| **main sources** | | | Källström 1939, 242 | DF 3419 | Källström 1939, 261 |

| | 431 | 432 | 433 | 434 | 435 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | F | F | D |
| **location** | Uppsala Cathedral | Uppsala Cathedral | Naantali | Turku | unknown |
| **type** | **pendant? Pyx?, 1** | **pendant? Pyx?, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** |
| **details** | small, round. In the choir of St Margaret. | small, round, shaped as Agnus Dei. In the choir of St Margaret. | "silver chain with reliquary" | "reliquary with silver chain" | heart-shaped; crucified Christ in the middle |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | Christ |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | | gilt (silver/copper?) | silver | silver | gilt silver, partly enameled |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1475 | b-1475 | b-1449 | b-1477 | c. 1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | from Henrik Classon to Naantali convent | from bishop Konrad Bitz to Pedher Erickson (part of payment) | |
| **where now** | | | / | / | DNM |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Bengtsson 2010, 148. | Bengtsson 2010, 148. | DF 2817 | REA 655 | |

| | 436 | 437 | 438 | 439 | 440 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | N | N |
| **location** | unknown | Dune, Gotland | Slängs, Lärbro, Gotland | unknown | Bö, Telemark |
| **type** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant ,1** | **pendant, 1** |
| **details** | round; calvary group in relief / St Anne on other side; inscription "St Anna ora pro nobis" | round; a lion; in the same chain with a cross. | round; a lion; in the same chain with a cross. | rectangular; Christ face, letters | Round; figures in relief: St Olaf and dragon + calvary |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Anne | | | | St Olaf; Christ |
| **size** | 9 cm | | | 5,5cm | 3,9x0,5cm/5,8cm? |
| **material** | gilt silver | | | silver | gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | c. 1500 | | | | c.1500 |
| **origin/maker** | Germany? | | | | Norway? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | DNM | SHM | SHM | OMCH | OMCH |
| **cat.nr** | 10380 | | 2821 | | C8348 |
| **main sources** | | Holmqvist 1963, 54-55. | Holmqvist 1963, 54-55. | | |

| | 441 | 442 | 443 | 444 | 445 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | S | S | S |
| **location** | Nidaros | Nidaros | Unknown, Öland | Adelsö | Edåsa |
| **type** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** |
| **details** | Round, with figures in relief on both sides: Christ crucified and St Anne group. | rosary of ivory beads attached to a flat, rectangular reliquary with mother-of-pearl image of St Catherine | round; image of Veronica's cloth on one side, Agnus Dei on the other | | Round; only 3 fragments preserved; engraved 'inr', 'ihs'. |
| **relics** | | Olaf? | | | Christ/hostia? Agnus dei wax? |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Catherine of Alexandria | Christ/hostia? | | |
| **size** | | | 4x0.9cm | | 5,5cm |
| **material** | gilt silver | ivory, gilt silver, mother-of-pearl | silver | silver | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | c. 1500 | 15th century | late medieval | early medieval | b-1530 |
| **origin/maker** | Nidaros? | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | DNM | DNM | LUHM | SHM | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | | | 14138 | 34000 | 9008:7 |
| **main sources** | Kielland 1927, fig. 338. | Liebgott 1981, 91 | | | |

| | 446 | 447 | 448 | 449 | 450 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Längbro, Närke | Banseröd, Stenestad | Tjureda, Småland | Vadstena? | Allmänningen, Valbo |
| **type** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** |
| **details** | rectangular; engraved images of adoration and Veronica | Only lid survives. Rectangular; calvary group in attached relief. | round; image of Christ on the cross and 3 heads. Had bone and linen fragments inside. | rectangular; engraved image of St Birgitta with cross and book and text referring to a relic of her table. Damaged: bottom half missing. | Round; chain preserved; a male and a female saint engraved; letters E and I. |
| **relics** | | | | Birgitta's table | |
| **saint(s) associated** | 3 kings, Madonna & child, Veronica | Christ | Christ | Birgitta | |
| **size** | 3,5 x 3,5 x 1,2 cm | 3,9 x 3 cm | 4,1x0.7cm | 8,9x5,1x1,6cm | c. 5 cm |
| **material** | silver | gold | gilt silver | gilt copper | |
| **dating (estimated)** | a-1530 | a-1450 | 1300s | c.1500 | |
| **origin/maker** | Germany? | Sweden? | | Germany? | Byzance? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | SHM | SHM | Småland Museum | SHM | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | 3017:9 | 2007 | L 969 | 9816 | 729 |
| **main sources** | Hildebrand, Sv. Medelt. III. 645; af Ugglas 1944, 31. | af Ugglas 1933, 38; af Ugglas 1944, 30. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 28. | Tegnér 1997, 409-410, 248; Andersson& Franzen 1975, 41–44. | |

| | 451 | 452 | 453 | 454 | 455 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | F | F | S | D |
| **location** | Posjärv, Överkalix | unknown (East Finland) | Halikko / Salo | Skillinge, Nättraby, Blekinge | Lund |
| **type** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **pendant, 1** | **brooch, 1** | **ring, 1** |
| **details** | round; cross pattern | Round; image of man on horseback?, formerly enameled? | Round; an engraved image of a lion; in the same chain with a cross. | Rectangular image of St Michael and the dragon in a round-angled rhombus frame; | |
| **relics** | | | | | Holy Cross |
| **saint(s) associated** | | George? | | Michael | |
| **size** | 2,6 cm | | | 5,4 x 4,5 cm | |
| **material** | bronze | silver | silver | gold, formerly enameled | gold |
| **dating (estimated)** | | | 12th century | c.1400 | b-1391 |
| **origin/maker** | | Byzance? | | Lübeck? | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | Archbishop Petrus of Lund to prior of Dalby abbey |
| **where now** | SHM | private/Mikkeli mus. | NBA | SHM | / |
| **cat.nr** | 16897 | | KM2570:1 | 7741 | |
| **main sources** | | Svanberg 1993, 208. | Immonen 2009a, 182; Immonen 2009b, 72-74. | Thordeman & Källström & Rydbeck 1951, 27. | Erslev 1901, 157 |

| | 456 | 457 | 458 | 459 | 460 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | N | D | D | N |
| **location** | Lund | Nidaros | Copenhagen, Cathedral | Roskilde, Franciscan abbey | Stavanger |
| **type** | **ring, 1** | **ring, 1** | **ampulla, 1** | **ampulla, 2?** | **ampulla?, 1** |
| **details** | had been sanctified by contact with the Veronica relic in Rome | "fingergull" | Upper part gilt. | Within a bursa | "sylffkare" |
| **relics** | | Christ's blood | Large part of the 11000 virgins. | "De oleo beati Nicolai" | Olaf's blood |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Christ | | Nicholas | Olaf |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | gold with sapphire | gold | silver, partly gilt | glass | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1391 | 1165 | b-1515 | b-1500 | b-1517 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | Archbishop Petrus of Lund to Bosö abbey | Archbishop Eystein | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Erslev 1901, 157 | Andås 2004, 190–191 | SRD VIII, 266. | SRD VIII, 304. | DN IV: 1074. |

| | 461 | 462 | 463 | 464 | 465 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | N | S | F | D |
| **location** | Vadstena | Bergen | Gamla Lödöse | Laitila | Copenhagen (Vor Frue K.) |
| **type** | **ampulla, 2** | **ampulla, 1** | **ampulla, 2** | **ampulla, 1** | **amphora, 1** |
| **details** | Not necessarily reliquaries | images of Thomas Becket's martyrium and miracles | pilgrim souvenirs from the tomb of St Thomas Becket | round, flat, with a star and a animal in relief | |
| **relics** | | Thomas Becket | | | Holy cross; Peter; Ingegerd's grave; 11000 virgins; others. (c. 15) |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Thomas Becket | Thomas Becket | | |
| **size** | | 10 cm | | 8,1 cm | |
| **material** | silver | bronze | | pewter | glass |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1346 | 12th or 13th century | | | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | Cambridge | Canterbury | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | King Magnus Eriksson & Queen Blanche (intended) | | | | |
| **where now** | / | UM Bergen | Lödöse museum | FHA | / |
| **cat.nr** | | BRM0/95070 | | 65039 | |
| **main sources** | SDHK 5307 | Larsen 2012, 28–37 | Rydbäck 1963, 236-248 | Tegnér 1997, 408 | SRD VIII, 260, 267; Liebgott 1982, 118 |

| | 466 | 467 | 468 | 469 | 470 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (cathedral) | Visby (Our Lady) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **flask, 1** | **flask?, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** |
| **details** | "silver bottle, gilt on top" | "budicke" | Round | Round | |
| **relics** | 11000 virgins (large piece) | | Holy Cross; various saints | Peter, Paul, Silvester, Petrissa, 11000 virgins | Lord's tomb; Peter; Canute; others (7) |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | "small" | | | | |
| **material** | silver, partly gilt | silver | silver | gilt silver | stone |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1427 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Liebgott 1982, 127. | Cronica Guthilandorum, 1978 (1633), 204. | SRD VIII, 1837, 282. | SRD VIII, 1837, 283. | SRD VIII, 1837, 284. |

| | 471 | 472 | 473 | 474 | 475 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund cathedral | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde cathedral | Roskilde cathedral | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** |
| **details** | "vase with two heads with gilt glorias on the upper part/lid? (sculptures/reliefs?) | Footed, white "vase", with green ends?(capite), marked with an O. | | | New, with a round stone, marked with a Q. |
| **relics** | Lord's grave and crib; Bartholomew; Barnabas; Martin; Clemens: Lucia. | many, incl. Wilhelm, 3 relics of Birgitta, e.g. silk woven by her. | | | Holy Cross; Magdalene's hair. |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | "small" | | "small"; 5 lod | | |
| **material** | silver, partly gilt | wood | | gold | silver, stone |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1470 | b-1500 | b-1563 | b-1563 | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94. | SRD VIII, 1837, 276. | DK, Roskilde, 1641 | DK, Roskilde, 1641 | SRD VIII, 1837, 276. |

| | 476 | 477 | 478 | 479 | 480 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) | Roskilde (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 27** | **reliquary, 1** |
| **details** | New, with an oblong stone, marked with an R. | New, with a cross on top and an image of Virgin Mary; marked with a V. | With an image of St George. | Marked with the letters AA, BB, C, CC, D, DD, EE, J, LL, M, P, R, SS, V, Y, Z, etc, respectively. | |
| **relics** | Maurice's rib; tooth of one of his companions. | John; Jacob major; Jacob minor; George; Elevo; Christopher; Canute's toga; Margrete; Lucia; Christina. | Servulus(?), Jacob; Magdalene; Lord's tomb; others (c. 10) | | 10 000 knights; Hallvard; Christ; others (c. 20) |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | George | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | silver, stone | silver | silver | | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | b-1500 | c. 1519 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | Queen Christina (at least the relics) |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 1837, 277. | SRD VIII, 1837, 277. | SRD VIII, 1837, 281. | SRD VIII, 294-306. | SRD VIII, 300. |

| | 481 | 482 | 483 | 484 | 485 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | N | N | N | S |
| **location** | Visby (Our Lady) | Bergen (Apostelkirken) | Bergen (Apostelkirken) | Bergen (Apostelkirken) | Arboga (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **reliquary, 2** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary?, 2** |
| **details** | silver "kar" | A pointed shape; enameled. | A large mother-of-pearl with silver and gilding. | A reliquary with a large, black bowl? (skaal) | two "helgedomakar" |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | silver | gilt and enameled silver | mother-of-pearl, silver, gold | | silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1427 | b-1523 | b-1523 | b-1523 | b-1529 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Cronica Guthilandorum, 1978 (1633), 203. | Nicolaysen 1862-66, 428. | Nicolaysen 1862-66, 428. | Nicolaysen 1862-66, 428. | Källström 1939, 150 |

| | 486 | 487 | 488 | 489 | 490 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Askeby (Cistercian abbey) | Askeby (Cistercian abbey) | Askeby (Cistercian abbey) | Björksta | Bolstad |
| **type** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 2** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquary?, 2** |
| **details** | | | "relikask" | | "helgedomakar", bought in 1475 and 1501, repaired in 1519 |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | 2 lmk 4 l 1 kv. | "small" | | | |
| **material** | silver? | silver? | | silver | silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1527 | b-1527 | b-1527 | b-1530 | b-1475; b-1501 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 152 | Källström 1939, 152 | Källström 1939, 152 | Källström 1939, 156 | Hallström 1936, 14; Dalslands dipl. 162, 216, 277 |

| | **491** | 492 | 493 | 494 | 495 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Eskilstuna (Franciscan abbey) | Fellingsbro | Färentuna | Husby abbey | Husby-Långhundra |
| **type** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** |
| **details** | "white" with silver | covered with a thin silver layer | | | |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | 13 l |
| **material** | silver, ivory? | silver, wood? | silver? | silver? | silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1534 | b-1545 | b-1531 | b-1545 | b-1554 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 169. | Källström 1939, 170 | Källström 1939, 175 | Källström 1939, 188 | Källström 1939, 189 |

| | 496 | 497 | 498 | 499 | 500 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Jäder | Linköping | Munktorp | Nydala abbey | Näsby |
| **type** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, x** | **reliquaries, 5** | **reliquaries?, 5** | **reliquary?, 1** |
| **details** | | possibly more than one reliquary, to be commissioned | 5 small reliquaries, partly gilt | 5 "helgedomakar" | |
| **relics** | | relics given to the commissioner/donor by St Birgitta in Rome | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | 4 lmk 4 l | 3 marcas puri | "small" | | |
| **material** | gilt silver? | gilt silver | silver?, gilt silver | silver? | silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1545 | 1368 | b-1545 | b-1529 | b-1545 |
| **origin/maker** | | Linköping? | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | canon Nils Jonsson | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 194 | DS 9267 | Källström 1939, 222 | Källström 1939, 227 | Källström 1939, 229 |

| | 501 | 502 | 503 | **504** | **505** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Riseberga (cistercian abbey) | Riseberga (cistercian abbey) | Riseberga (cistercian abbey) | Skara | Skänninge (Dominican abbey) |
| **type** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 2** | **reliquary?, 1** |
| **details** | "helgedomakar", broken, top missing | ivory with silver nails, a foot of gilt silver; broken | a silver-coated ivory object with a column and two rings | Bishop Bengt (c.1150-1190) had "both reliquaries" repaired and inspected their contents | |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | 2 lmk 2 l |
| **material** | gilt silver? | ivory, silver | ivory, silver | | silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | | | | b-1150 | b-1529 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 235 | Källström 1939, 235 | Källström 1939, 235 | Westgötalagen 1827, 306 | Källström 1939, 246 |

| | 506 | 507 | 508 | 509 | 510 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Sollentuna | Spånga | Stockholm Cathedral | Stockholm Cathedral | Stockholm Cathedral |
| **type** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquary?, 1** |
| **details** | | | "helgedomakar", at the altar of the 10 000 knights. | "helgedomakar", in the choir of Our Lady | "helgedomakar", in the choir of St George |
| **relics** | | | 10 000 knights? | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | 10 000 knights? | | |
| **size** | | | 3 lmk 5,5 l | 1,5 lmk 2,5 l 0,5 kv. | 6,5 lmk 6 l |
| **material** | gilt silver | gilt silver? | silver | silver? | silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1531 | b-1530 | b-1527 | b-1527 | b-1527 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 251 | Källström 1939, 252 | Källström 1939, 256. | Källström 1939, 254. | Källström 1939, 254. |

| | 511 | 512 | 513 | 514 | 515 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Söderköping (fransiscans) | Svanshals | Uppsala Cathedral | Uppsala Cathedral | Uppsala Cathedral |
| **type** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 2** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary, 1** |
| **details** | | "non-gilt silver with bones" | in the choir of St Nicholas and St Katarina | at the altar of St Bartholomew | at the altar of St Anne |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | 8,5 lmk 7,5 l | | | |
| **material** | silver? | silver | | | gilt copper |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1527 | b-1540 | b-1444 | b-1444 | b-1475 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 267 | Källström 1939, 263 | Bengtsson 2010, 148. | Bengtsson 2010, 148. | Bengtsson 2010, 148. |

| | 516 | 517 | 518 | 519 | 520 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Vadstena convent | Vadstena convent | Vadstena convent | Vendel | Väsby |
| **type** | **reliquaries, x** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquary, 1** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquary?, 1** |
| **details** | several, in various shapes, with gems | "Sankta Birgitte bulle" | reliquary of brass and coral, stolen in 1557 | "helgedomakar" | "helgedomakar", non-gilt |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Birgitta? | | | |
| **size** | | | 6,5 lod | | 1 lmk 9 l |
| **material** | gold, gems | | brass, coral | gilt silver? | silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1373 | b-1557 | b-1557 | b-1555 | b-1545 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | Birgitta | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | *Processus... b. Katerine de Vadstenis* 1942–46, 55–56 | Silfverstolpe 1895 - 1898, 40-43. | Silfverstolpe 1895 - 1898, 198. | Källström 1939, 287. | Källström 1939, 294. |

| | 521 | 522 | 523 | 524 | 525 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | F |
| **location** | Västerås cathedral | Västerås cathedral | Växjö cathedral | Växjö cathedral | Turku |
| **type** | **reliquary?, 4** | **reliquary?, 1** | **reliquaries?, 12** | **reliquaries?, 2** | **reliquary, 1** |
| **details** | four "helgedomakar" | "helgedomakar", gilt with a copper foot | 12 gilt reliquaries ("helgedomakar") with marble rings | non- gilt feet for two "helgedomakar" | (possibly several) at the altar of Corpus Christi |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | silver? | gilt silver?, copper | gilt silver, marble | silver? | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1527 | b-1545 | b-1541 | b-1541 | c.1420 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | Bishop Magnus Tawast |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 296 | Källström 1939, 296 | Källström 1939, 301. | Källström 1939, 302. | Juusten 1988, 58 |

| | 526 | 527 | 528 | 529 | 530 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | F | D | S | F | D |
| **location** | Turku | Lund cathedral | Eskilstuna | Turku | Copenhagen (Franciscan abbey) |
| **type** | **reliquary, 1** | **capsa, 1** | **capsula, 1** | **capsa, 2** | **sculpture, 1** |
| **details** | at the altar of St Lawrence | "unam capsam argenteam pro relliquiis ponderis VIIÍ marchas argenti puri" | | at the altar of St George, "due capse pro reliquiis" | "circa bajulationem", Pietá? |
| **relics** | | | Eskil | | Mary's milk |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | Eskil | | Mary |
| **size** | | 1,8 kg | | | |
| **material** | silver | silver | | | |
| **dating (estimated)** | | b-1234 | b-1397 | | b-1500 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | archbishop Uffo Thrugotsen | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | REA, 584 | Lunde domkapitels geveböger 1884 - 89, 311. | SHDK 14845 | REA, 579 | SRD VIII, 1837, 289. |

| | 531 | 532 | 533 | 534 | 535 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Copenhagen (Cathedral) |
| **type** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** |
| **details** | Image of Virgin Mary with a round crystal. | "new" | "new" | "new" | "new" |
| **relics** | Mary's hair, others (c. 3) | Mary's hair and milk, Lord's grave, others (c. 10); uknown relics | Canute, 10000 martyrs, others (c. 10), unnamed relics | Lucius' tooth, pallium and shirt, St Machutus, 11000 virgins, Catherine, Holy Cross | Holy cross, John Evangelist, others (c. 15) |
| **saint(s) associated** | Mary | Mary | Mary | Lucius | Mary Magdalene |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | crystal, silver? | | silver?, gilt except for base | | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 261, 267. | SRD VIII, 264, 268; Liebgott 1982, 123. | SRD VIII, 265, 268; Liebgott 1982, 125. | SRD VIII, 264, 268; Liebgott 1982, 123. | SRD VIII, 264, 268; Jexlev 1976, 38; Liebgott 1982, 124. |

| | 536 | 537 | 538 | 539 | 540 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral |
| **type** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** |
| **details** | "old" | "new" | "old" | archbishop, carrying a pyx (the relics are mentioned in the pyx) | a figure holding a book and a grill |
| **relics** | Mary Magdalene, 11000 virgins and others | Wilhelm, Birgitta, Olaf, Clemens (large part), others (c. 10), unnamed relics | Holy cross (large piece) | John Bewerlac; Sigfrid; Lord's grave; Peter; Cyriacus; Gall. . | Lawrence; Benedict; Margaret; Regina; Florencia; many others. |
| **saint(s) associated** | Mary Magdalene | Trinity | Christ | Sigfrid | Lawrence |
| **size** | | | "large" | "large" | "small" |
| **material** | | | wood? | gilt silver | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1450? | b-1515 | b-1515 | b-1406 | b-1470 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | England? | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | King Henry IV of England to Archbishop Petrus Lycke | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD VIII, 266, 268; Liebgott 1982, 126. | SRD VIII, 265, 268; Liebgott 1982, 125. | Liebgott 1982, 118 | SRD 8, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 93. | SRD 8, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 95. |

| | 541 | 542 | 543 | 544 | 545 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | | D |
| **location** | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral | Visby, Our Lady | Visby, Our Lady |
| **type** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** |
| **details** | | | St Barbara | A large image (reliquary status uncertain) | Virgin Mary (reliquary status uncertain) |
| **relics** | 11000 virgins (6 fragments); Gregorius Maurus; Cassius & Florencius. | Canute (a wristbone) | 11000 virgins (many relics); Adrian's finger. | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Lawrence | Canute | Barbara | | Mary? |
| **size** | "large" | | | "like a 5-year-old child" | |
| **material** | silver | gilt silver | silver | gold | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1475 | b-1470 | a-1460 | b-1427 | b-1427 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | Lady Christina at Gladsax | Nicolaus Tuvonis, chamberlain at Curia Lundensis. | lady Barbara Brahe, widow of knight Styge. | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 455; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 105. | SRD 8, 455; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 105-106. | SRD 8, 455; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 106. | Chronica Guthilandorum, 202 | Chronica Guthilandorum, 205 |

| | 546 | 547 | 548 | 549 | 550 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | N | N | N | N |
| **location** | Visby, Our Lady | Bergen, Dominican abbey | Bergen, Apostle church | Bergen, Apostle church | Oslo, Mariakirken |
| **type** | **sculpture, 3** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** |
| **details** | Angels, two of them with gilt wings (reliquary status uncertain) | Virgin Mary with a little silver monstrance | Virgin Mary (reliquary status uncertain) | John the Baptist (reliquary status uncertain) | statue of silver, crown of gold |
| **relics** | | | | | St Louis' finger |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Mary | | | Louis |
| **size** | | c. 10 cm | small | small | "et alne" |
| **material** | gilt silver | silver | silver | silver | silver, gold |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1427 | b-1530 | b-1523 | b-1523 | b-1304 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | France, Paris; Thiebaut l'Orfèvre |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | From Philip IV of France to Haakon V |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Chronica Guthilandorum, 204-205 | DN 13: 569. | Nicolaysen 1862–1866, s. 428 | Nicolaysen 1862–1866, s. 428 | Johnsen 1965; Fett 1909, 145. |

| | 551 | 552 | 553 | 554 | 555 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Västerås cathedral | Västerås cathedral | Västerås cathedral | Västerås cathedral | Bälinge |
| **type** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** |
| **details** | (reliquary status uncertain) | (reliquary status uncertain) | (reliquary status uncertain) | (reliquary status uncertain) | crowned (reliquary status uncertain) |
| **relics** | | | | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | John | Geronimo | Sebastian | Lawrence | Madonna |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | | | | | gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | | | | | |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 296 | Källström 1939, 296 | Källström 1939, 297 | Källström 1939, 296-297 | Af Ugglas 1935, 19. |

| | 556 | 557 | 558 | 559 | 560 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | F |
| **location** | Bälinge, Uppland | Eskilstuna (Franciscan abbey) | Linköping Franciscan abbey | Stockholm Cathedral | Porvoo |
| **type** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** |
| **details** | (reliquary status uncertain) | (reliquary status uncertain) | St Francis | standing | Mary crowned (reliquary status uncertain) |
| **relics** | | | St Francis' wound bandages | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Nicholas | John | St Francis | Catherine of Alexandria | Mary&Jesus |
| **size** | | | 1 marcam puri | | |
| **material** | gilt silver | gilt silver | gilt silver | gilt silver | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | | | 1368 | | |
| **origin/maker** | | | Sweden | Sweden? | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | to be made with canon Nils Jonsson's donation | Nils Johansson Lenck? | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 162. | Källström 1939, 169. | SD 9267 | Källström 1939, 4–5, 114, 255–256 | Källström 1939, 313; 320 |

| | 561 | 562 | 563 | 564 | 565 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | F | F | F | F | S |
| **location** | Turku | Pyttis/Pyhtää | Pernå | Pernå | Linköping |
| **type** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** | **sculpture, 1** |
| **details** | gilt but "white hair" (reliquary status uncertain) | (reliquary status uncertain) | with a gilt crown (reliquary status uncertain) | (reliquary status uncertain) | standing, holding sword and wheel; space for relics in podium |
| **relics** | | | | | Katarina of Vadstena? |
| **saint(s) associated** | Olaf | Anne | Eric | Lawrence | Catherine of Alexandria |
| **size** | | | | | 36,5cm |
| **material** | gilt silver | silver? | gilt silver | silver | gilt silver, pearls |
| **dating (estimated)** | | | | | 1509 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | Sweden? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | Nils Johansson Lenck, prebendary of Sthlm Cath. |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | SHM |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | 5 |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 325 | Leinberg 1892, 1; Källström 1939, 320; Räsänen 2009, 93 | Källström 1939, 320 | Källström 1939, 320 | Mörkfors 1987, 46; Nisbeth & Estham 2001, 81. |

| | 566 | 567 | 568 | 569 | 570 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Stockholm Cathedral | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Lund cathedral | Lund cathedral |
| **type** | **sculpture, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** |
| **details** | Saint on horseback; had relics with list on red velvet inside a pendant on St. George's chest: | hand | | holding the globus cruciger | hand |
| **relics** | George, Blasius, Germanus, Cyriacus | St Abbot Wilhelm's finger and part of his shoulderblade, St Christine, other non-specified relics. | | Canute (upper arm bone) | Clement (several finger bones); Lawrence; many others. |
| **saint(s) associated** | George | St Wilhelm of Aebelholt? | | Canute | Clement |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | wood | silver-gilt, copper? | silver | gilt silver | gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1489 | b-1515 | late medieval | b-1414 | b-1414 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | Sten Sture & his spouse | | | | |
| **where now** | Stockholm Cathedral | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Svanberg 1998, 45–48 | SRD VIII, 262.Liebgott 1982, 120. | DK Kbh s.37 | SRD 8, 448; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 92. | SRD 8, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94. |

| | 571 | 572 | 573 | 574 | 575 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Lund cathedral | Odense, St Alban's church? | Ribe? | Roskilde (Cathedral) | Vestervig |
| **type** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 2** |
| **details** | hand holding a pen between fingers | Queen Christina made a donation to it in 1505. | hand; reliquary or votive? | With a large, detachable foot; two big glasses to see relic. | |
| **relics** | Birgitta's finger (part); Magdalene | Alban's shoulderblade? | | Mary Magdalene | Thöger? |
| **saint(s) associated** | Birgitta | Alban | | Mary Magdalene | Thöger? |
| **size** | | | | >7 lmk | |
| **material** | silver | | silver | silver, gems, glass/crystal | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1414 | b-1505 | b-1312 | b-1563 | |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | St Canute? | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SRD 8, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94. | Jörgensen 1899, 259; 285-286. | Petersen 1874, 437: Ribe Oldemoder, 1869, 116 | DK Rosk. s.1668 | Hald 1909. |

| | 576 | 577 | 578 | 579 | 580 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | S | S | S |
| **location** | Bergen (Apostelkirken) | Bergen (Apostelkirken) | Eskilstuna (Franciscan abbey) | Eskilstuna (Franciscan abbey) | Linköping Cathedral |
| **type** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 2** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** |
| **details** | With a little silver in one end and with a crystal. | silver hands | its foot/base was decorated with 'two towers' | | |
| **relics** | | | Eskil | David | Eric |
| **saint(s) associated** | | | Eskil | David | Eric |
| **size** | | | | | c.1,5kg |
| **material** | silver, crystal | silver | silver? | silver? | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1523 | b-1319 | b-1534 | b-1534 | b-1520 |
| **origin/maker** | Norway? | Norway? | | | Sweden? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | Haakon V | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Nicolaysen 1862–1866, s. 428 | Dipl.Norv. IV:128 | Källström 1939, 169 | Källström 1939, 169. | Källström 1939, 117; 212 |

| | 581 | 582 | 583 | 584 | 585 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Linköping Cathedral | Mora | Riseberga (cistercian abbey) | Skara | Skänninge (Dominican abbey?) |
| **type** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** |
| **details** | | | | "the holy hand" | decorated with gems |
| **relics** | Henrik | | Catholica/Katarina? | | Ingrid? Olaf? |
| **saint(s) associated** | Henrik | | Catholica/Katarina? | | Ingrid of Skänninge? Olaf? |
| **size** | c.1,3kg | | | | 4,5 lödiga mark |
| **material** | | silver | silver | | silver, gems |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1520 | b-1530 | a-1434 | b-1190 | |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden? | | Sweden? | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | Bishop Bengt (c.1150-1190) | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 117; 212 | Källström 1939, 222. | *Närkes medeltida urk* under, 109–111. | Westgötalagen 1827, 306 | af Ugglas 1935, 24; Källström 1939, 246 |

| | 586 | 587 | 588 | 589 | 590 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Uppsala | Vadstena | Vadstena | Västerfärnebo | Västerås cathedral |
| **type** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 2** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 2** |
| **details** | hand | | "Handenae helga". | "a hand" | silver arm |
| **relics** | Eric | Katarina | Canute | | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Eric? | Katarina of Vadstena | Canute | | |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | silver | gilt silver | gilt silver | silver? | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1367 | 1489 | 1422 | b-1530 | b-1527 |
| **origin/maker** | Sweden? | | Rome | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | Queen Filippa on Laetare Sunday 1422. | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | SD 9037 | DV 884:14; *Stora kyrkofeste* n… , 46-47. | DV 330 | Källström 1939, 294 | Källström 1939, 297 |

| | 591 | 592 | 593 | 594 | 595 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | F | F | D |
| **location** | Växjö cathedral | Växjö cathedral | Naantali, Birgittine convent | Turku cathedral | unknown |
| **type** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1-2** | **arm, 1** |
| **details** | "a gilt hand with a large gilt foot, surrounded by small gilt figures" | "a white arm without foot" | | two arm bones with a silk wrapping remain, maybe from these | window; arm bone with authentica; Ulfstand coat-of-arms |
| **relics** | | | | Henrik | 10000 martyrs |
| **saint(s) associated** | Sigfrid? | | | Henrik | 10000 martyrs |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | gilt silver? | silver | gilt silver | silver | oak |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1541 | b-1541 | b-1530 | 1400 | 1400s-1500s |
| **origin/maker** | | | | Venice? | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | bishop Magnus Tavast | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | DNM |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | 10370 |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 301. | Källström 1939, 301. | Källström 1939, 319. | Juusten 1988, 58; Lahti 2003, 9–10. | Lahti 2015 |

| | 596 | 597 | 598 | 599 | 600 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D? | S | S | D | D |
| **location** | unknown | Linköping (in a field) | Linköping (in a field) | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Copenhagen (Cathedral) |
| **type** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **arm, 1** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** |
| **details** | round window; hand missing; engraved text "dextera domini fecit virtutem"; images of Christ and saints | hand in pen-holding position; round window; inscription about Birgitta | hand in blessing position; round window; inscription about Eskil | "an entire head", crowned | "an entire head", not crowned |
| **relics** | | Birgitta | Eskil | 11000 virgins | 11000 virgins |
| **saint(s) associated** | Olaf? | Birgitta | Eskil | 11000 virgins | 11000 virgins |
| **size** | 42,5cm | 51cm | 52cm | | |
| **material** | wood, gilt copper, enamel, gems | gilt silver | gilt silver | wood? | wood? |
| **dating (estimated)** | c.1200 | b-1450 | b-1450 | b-1515 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | Cologne? | Sweden | Sweden | Cologne? | Cologne? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | DNM | SHM | SHM | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | 9083 | 6 | 7 | | |
| **main sources** | Junghans 2002, 93-94 | Mörkfors 1987, 46; Nisbeth & Estham 2001, 81. | Tegnér 1997, 399–400 | SRD VIII, 260, 267; Liebgott 1982, 118. | SRD VIII, 260, 267; Liebgott 1982, 118. |

| | 601 | 602 | 603 | 604 | 605 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | D |
| **location** | Copenhagen (Cathedral) | Esrum abbey | Lund | Lund | Odense, St Canute's church |
| **type** | **head, 2** | **head, 13** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** |
| **details** | | 13 heads on the high altar / altar dedicated to the 11 000 virgins | silver head with gilt crown and hair | head with shoulders, bishop's mitre | Queen Christine made a donation to it in 1505. |
| **relics** | | Eleven thousand Virgins | Lawrence (whole head) | Lord's grave; Clement (a bone); Thomas Becket | Canute? |
| **saint(s) associated** | | Eleven thousand Virgins | Lawrence | Thomas Becket? | Canute |
| **size** | | | "large" | "small" | |
| **material** | silver | wood? | silver, partly gilt | silver | |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1529 | 1158 | c.1406 | b-1470 | b-1505 |
| **origin/maker** | | Cologne? | England? | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | Archbishop Eskil of Lund | Henry IV of England (at Erik of Pommern's wedding?). | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | DK: Kbh, 38 | Crombach 1647, 668 | SRD 8, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94-95. | SRD 8, 449; Axel-Nilsson 1989, 94. | Jörgensen 1899, 259; 279-281. |

| | 606 | 607 | 608 | 609 | 610 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | D | D | D | D | N |
| **location** | Roskilde (Cathedral) | Roskilde (Cathedral) | Roskilde (Cathedral) | Roskilde (Cathedral) | Oslo, Mariakirken |
| **type** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** | **head, 2** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** |
| **details** | | | in the Queen's chapel | bust, with tiara or mithre; textile wrap for skull still exists | |
| **relics** | 11000 virgins/Euphrosina | 11000 virgins/Florentia | 11000 virgins | Lucius | Eric |
| **saint(s) associated** | 11000 virgins | 11000 virgins | 11000 virgins | Lucius | Eric |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | wood? | wood? | wood? | gilt silver, gems | silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | | | b-1484 | b-1400 | |
| **origin/maker** | | | | | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | queen Dorothea | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | DK: Roskilde, 1640-1641. | DK: Roskilde, 1640-1641. | DK, Roskilde, 1640 | DK Roskilde, 1638; Liepe 2017 | Bygdén 1954, 233-235 |

| | 611 | 612 | 613 | 614 | 615 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | N | N | S | S | S |
| **location** | Selje | Selje | Eskilstuna (Franciscan abbey) | Linköping Cathedral | Munktorp |
| **type** | **head?, 1** | **head?, 1** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** | **head?, 1** |
| **details** | | | | Nils Hermansson, bishop (not sure if reliquary existed; funds for a new silver head were collected) | "relikvarium för 'Sankt Davids huvud och arm" |
| **relics** | Alban | Sunniva | Eskil | Nils Hermansson | David |
| **saint(s) associated** | Alban | Sunniva | Eskil | Nils Hermansson | David |
| **size** | | | | | 21 1/2 lmk |
| **material** | | | gilt silver | silver? | gilt silver |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1200 | b-1200 | | b-Katarina | b-1545 |
| **origin/maker** | | | | Sweden? | Sweden? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Flateyjarbók: Fortelling om Albani og Sunnifas död; DuBois 2008, 69. | DuBois 2008, 89–92 | Källström 1939, 169 | Olsson 1944, 235-238 | Källström 1939, 117, 222; Af Ugglas 1935, 22-24. |

| | 616 | 617 | 618 | 619 | 620 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Skara | Uppsala | Vadstena | Vadstena | Vadstena |
| **type** | **head, 1** | **head?, 1** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** |
| **details** | A golden heart pendant was hanging from the head | decorated with a gem "solitary" | bust (uncertain; depicted in the Constance council chronicle) | Made and decorated for the skull relic; not necessarily head-shaped. | |
| **relics** | Brynolf | Eric | Birgitta | Katarina of Vadstena | 11000 virgins |
| **saint(s) associated** | Brynolf | Eric | Birgitta | Katarina | 11000 virgins |
| **size** | | | | | |
| **material** | wood, copper? | silver? | wood? | | wood? |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1492? | b-1360 | 14th-15th C? | 1489 | b-1515 |
| **origin/maker** | | | Sweden? | Sweden? | Cologne? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | / | | | papal legate Antonio Possevino |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 5; 61; 241 | SHDK 7842 | Lindblom 1963, 19–20; Feger / Richental 1964, 33r. | DV 884:14 | Andersson 1983, 94 |

| | 621 | 622 | 623 | 624 | 625 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | S | S | S | S |
| **location** | Vadstena | Vadstena | Visby (Dominican abbey) | Visby (Dominican abbey) | Västerås cathedral |
| **type** | **head, 2** | **head, 2** | **head, 10** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** |
| **details** | | crowned | 10 heads, at least one portable "on the neck" | | |
| **relics** | 11000 virgins | 11000 virgins (head) | Eleven thousand Virgins | Theban legion | David? |
| **saint(s) associated** | 11000 virgins | 11000 virgins | Eleven thousand Virgins | Theban legion | David? |
| **size** | | | | | c.2,17kg |
| **material** | wood? | wood | textile? Wood? | textile? Wood? | silver? |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1515 | b-1346 | b-1286 | b-1286 | |
| **origin/maker** | Cologne? | Cologne? | Cologne/Stommeln | Cologne/Stommeln | |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | two Birgittine brothers | King Magnus & Queen Blanche | Petrus de Dacia | Petrus de Dacia | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | / | / |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | *Diarium Vadstenense* , 6.10.1515 | SDHK 5307 | Asztalos 1991, 320-325; 394 | Asztalos 1991, 320-325; 394 | Källström 1939, 297 |

| | 626 | 627 | 628 | 629 | 630 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **country** | S | F | F | S | F |
| **location** | Växjö cathedral | Porvoo | Turku | Sigtuna | Turku |
| **type** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** | **head, 1** |
| **details** | "large white head" | crowned | A skull with a silk "hood" still remains, maybe from inside this. | A crowned bust of a female saint; top of head open; no attributes. | Half-globe-shaped construction of bones and silk. |
| **relics** | Sigfrid? | Ursula | Henrik | Ursula? | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Sigfrid? | Ursula | Henrik | Ursula? | Ursula? |
| **size** | "large" | | | 43,5cm | |
| **material** | "white"=silver? | silver | gilt silver | wood | silk |
| **dating (estimated)** | b-1541 | b-1535 | 1400 | 1400s? | 1350 |
| **origin/maker** | | Cologne? | Venice? | Sweden? | Cologne? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | | | bishop Magnus Tavast | | |
| **where now** | / | / | / | Mariakyrkan | TCM |
| **cat.nr** | | | | | |
| **main sources** | Källström 1939, 301 | Leinberg 1892, 1 | Juusten 1988, 58 | Lahti 2017 | Karttila 2014, 13-14 |

| | **631** |
|---|---|
| **country** | F |
| **location** | Turku |
| **type** | **head, 1** |
| **details** | Skull-shaped construction of bones and silk; embroidered image of decapitation. |
| **relics** | |
| **saint(s) associated** | Ursula? |
| **size** | |
| **material** | silk |
| **dating (estimated)** | 1350 |
| **origin/maker** | Cologne? |
| **owner/ donor/ commissioner** | |
| **where now** | TCM |
| **cat.nr** | |
| **main sources** | Lahti 2002, 19-22; Arponen & Maijanen & Immonen 2018, 149-183. |

Sofia Lahti

# Silver Arms and Silk Heads

## Medieval Reliquaries in the Nordic Countries

Reliquaries were precious containers that highlighted and protected the relics of saints in medieval churches. Thousands of such holy artefacts may have existed in Nordic churches, but nearly all are now lost.

This thesis is the first comprehensive study on the topic, aiming at understanding how reliquaries were perceived in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland during the Middle Ages. The first aspect of this concerns the reliquaries' visual and material characteristics, and how those were related to their contents (the relics). The second aspect concerns the ways reliquaries were described, treated, and interacted with. Those visual and social aspects were influenced by varying local and international contextual factors, such as religious and aesthetic ideals, economical and political situations, or personal intentions of the people involved.

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